



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600049129V

35.

335.





# OLD MAIDS;

41

THEIR

VARIETIES, CHARACTERS, AND CONDITIONS.

—————"with gentle hand  
Touch—for there is a spirit in the leaves."  
WORDSWORTH.

—————"domus nympharum."  
VIRGIL.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:  
PUBLISHED BY SMITH, ELDER AND CO.,  
BOOKSELLERS TO THEIR MAJESTIES,  
CORNHILL.

1835.

335-



**LONDON:**  
**T. C. Newby, Printer, 11, Little Queen Street.**

## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

---

It sometimes happens when an author is successful, that his success is neither in accordance with his expectation, nor with the actual merits of his production. The public in passing its judgment upon a book, even when that judgment is favourable, not unfrequently wounds the self-love of the writer—He finds himself seen through a false medium—he is taken up on points, which are perhaps accidental portions of his pages,—and hence it is a common saying, of more than one popular author of the day, that they have never been closely analysed, and consequently, that they are not understood. This is a mortification, and although praise qualifies it, the man who is thus misunderstood, is ever uncomfortable in placing a new book before the public.—His strength, his peculiar literary impress, he



knows to be passed over, and he fears, lest the particulars, with which his critics have chosen to mark him, should be found wanting—they are not essentials of his moral and intellectual stamina, and consequently may be overlooked or exaggerated by him.

In this dilemma, fortunately for ourselves, we are not placed.—With one voice, and as it were with one accord, the intellectual and literary portion of the press, have spoken the same language of 'OLD MAIDS,' and what is more, have spoken precisely the language, it has been our wish, that they should speak—We say fortunately, because our very title exposed us to a sneer, on the opening of the work—Had this been taken advantage of, the 'Sisterhood,' whom we were especially anxious that our book should reach, would have been frightened from us. We rejoice that it has not been so, and in placing our Second Edition before the reading public, we have only to express our acknowledgments, for the favourable reception of the First.

*Champion Hill,*  
22nd May, 1835.

# CONTENTS.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### *INTRODUCTORY AND DEDICATORY.*

## CHAPTER II.

### *CLASSIFICATION OF OLD MAIDS.*

What is an Old Maid?—Difficulties attending the question—Council of Old Maids.—General definition—Generic divisions—Voluntary Old Maids—Involuntary Old Maids—Accidental Old Maids—Inexplicable Old Maids—Literary Old Maids ..... 16

## CHAPTER III.

### *OLD MAIDS IN GENERAL.*

Erroneous opinions of the Sisterhood as to their Order—Effects of our labours—Difficulty of drawing a general likeness—Our success—Description of an Old Maid—False notions of the world—A creature full of love and tenderness—Causes of this—Her condition contrasted with married life—Common treatment of Old Maids in families, and among relatives ..... 30

## CHAPTER IV.

*VOLUNTARY OLD MAIDS.*

What is a Voluntary Old Maid—Description of two—Their different characters—The principle of love—The noble purity of Voluntary Virginity—The amiability and simplicity of its possessors—Effects of these on their social conduct—The perfections and consequences of Voluntary Chastity—Dedicated to religious rites—The vestals—The ‘ Daughters of the Sun ’—The ‘ Valhalla ’—Opinions of the Christian Fathers—Of the Grecians—Our opinion of the proper position of Voluntary Old Maids—Our household goddesses, &c.—Old Maids from constitutional apathy—their inferiority ..... 51

## CHAPTER V.

*INVOLUNTARY OLD MAIDS.*

Various modes of bringing themselves under the power of Hymen described—Watering-places, balls, dress, study, music, painting, &c., &c.—Singing and weeping; failure of these—Fortune telling—Divinations: ‘ the ash leaf,’ ‘ hemp seed,’ ‘ the daisy,’ ‘ the new moon,’ ‘ the T,’ ‘ Valentine’s morn,’ &c., &c.—Perseverance of Involuntary Old Maids, in their search after Husbands—Considerations and consolations—Ill-natured Old Maids—Remarks—Advice to..... 69

## CHAPTER VI.

*ACCIDENTAL OLD MAIDS.*

Description—Letter from an Accidental Old Maid to a young friend, containing a brief history of her ‘accidents’—Her first, second, third and fourth engagements described—Her advice—Some account of this distinguished Old Maid, and remarks upon her—A second letter, with a history of another Accidental Old Maid—Her first and last love—Effects of blighted affection—Disappointed Old Maids; their fierceness—Address to mourning Maidens—Grounds of consolation—Advice to spiteful Old Maids 90

## CHAPTER VII.

*INEXPLICABLE OLD MAIDS.*

A conversation with one—Her garden—Her own remarks upon herself—History of one of her mysteries, and of her lover—Her lover's version of the story—Her resignation—Her kindness and goodness of heart—Her happy condition described—An evening with her, &c. .... 139

## CHAPTER VIII.

*LITERARY OLD MAIDS.*

Their hard fortune—Various modes in which they keep love at bay—Our arrangements of them and its consequences—Refusal of Old Maids in general to acknowledge them as Sisters—Speech on the occasion, and its effects—Explanation of a learned and metaphysical Old Maid—Explanation of a poetical and enthusiastic Old Maid—Explanation of a feminine and gentle Literary Old Maid—Address to them—Excellence of their pursuits—Proofs they afford of the equality of intellect in the sexes, &c., &c. .... 163

## CHAPTER IX.

*HONORARY OLD MAIDS.*

Letter from an Honorary Old Maid—Her account of herself—An Old Maid by mistake—Her conduct and its consequences—Her love—Has an offer—Her mistake—Her resignation ..... 194

## CHAPTER X.

*CONCLUSION.*

Valedictory remarks—Purity of our Work—More ‘last words’ ..... 210

*L'ENVOY.*

## PREFACE.

---

It was remarked by Sarah Fielding, a distinguished 'Old Maid,' of the last century—and sister to the immortal novelist of the same name, "That Old Maids are only mischievous, like monkeys, for want of employment." This remark of the amiable spinster is a cruel satire upon the venerable sisterhood, and so much were we offended by it, that we threw down her work with an angry *pish*. We were, however, reconciled some time afterwards by a farther examination, and we con-

sider the above observation as a proof merely, that she was mistaken in her views. She had seized on the popular opinion, that scandal-making, tale-bearing, prying curiosity, and carping ill-will, are general characteristics of antiquated maidenhood,—and she arrived at the erroneous conclusion, that these unamiable propensities must be essential ingredients in the composition of an *Old Maid* ; as it cannot be supposed, that the simple circumstance of want of employment can so completely change her nature. A perusal of the following pages will dispel this illusion, and place the professors of Old Maidism in that social rank, of which they have long been most unjustly deprived.

In earlier ages, virginity and chastity were looked upon as sacred things—and regarded with reverence and awe. Miracles were said to be performed by those pure and spotless beings, who preserved them untainted—and festivals were instituted to keep them in perpetual remembrance,

of which some traces may yet be discovered. We almost blush, therefore, when we think, how much we have degenerated in these respects, from our pious and gallant forefathers.

It has happened unfortunately for our fair friends—that the few writers, whose talents have been devoted to their cause, have too frequently suffered a wandering imagination to invest their works with an air of indelicacy.—This has injured in place of benefitting the ‘order.’ Our own pages are, however, free from every thing which can, by any possibility, crimson the cheek of a vestal. We should indeed hold ourself a recreant knight, did the slightest impurity mingle with our chivalrous devotion, dedicated as it is to the purest of living creatures.—No meaning lurks under ‘our silver shield,’ unworthy of its emblazonment.—Our work may be read by a sister to her brother—or by a father, to his chaste and beloved daughter.



Writers of novels, and manufacturers of tales, in sketching Old Maids, have studied effect rather than truth;—some remarkable oddity has been selected, and brought forward as a specimen of the entire class,—or some bizarre and fanciful portrait, drawn by the hand of a caricaturist, held up as a model.—Our portraits are of Nature's painting—and in these her handiwork is exhibited, free from the dust and coarse varnish, which have hitherto obscured the lineaments of ancient virginity.

Neither, we grieve to say, have Old Maids themselves been true to their own dignity,—they have yielded to the current of common prejudice,—they have suffered the sarcasms and coldness with which they are treated to sour their temper, and to pucker their features; and, what is still worse, to blind them to the many advantages of their position. By this culpable weakness, they have too often given a pretext and a handle to

their slanderers.—‘ Mais nous avons changé tout cela.’

We think we cannot better close our brief preface, than by quoting the following beautiful allegory from the Sarah Fielding above mentioned. It will make a tolerable opening to our own work, the perusal of which, we have little hesitation in asserting, will be attended by the same feelings she so well describes as having arisen from a visit to the domain of Celibacy.

We must premise, that in a vision, she had previously visited the Temple of Marriage, and had been driven back in terror, on seeing the horrible and frightful attendants, which waited upon the presiding divinity.

“ If any heart,” says she, “ beat with rapture at entering the avenues leading to the Temple of Marriage, those which led to the abode of this solitary Goddess (Celibacy) produced a very contrary effect,—the grove was composed of ever-

greens, which cast a gloomy and melancholy shade, the way was rough and thorny, and covered with plants of the most unpleasing aspect,—no flowers perfumed the air—no feathered warblers strained their little throats—the bird of Pallas, hooting from the boughs, and breaking the solemn silence, cast a damp upon my heart, which almost tempted me to return to the deity I had just rejected. Shame however urged me to persevere, and with infinite labor I at length reached the summit of the hill, on which stood the temple.—I entered with reluctance, which was not lessened by the appearance of the Goddess ; she was seated on a throne of ebony—her countenance was severe—her complexion pale and unanimated—she wore a loose robe of the purest white—a garland of willow on her head, and held in her hand a bunch of barren yew—Chastity and Pride supported her train—before her stood Contempt, Neglect and Derision—but as her port was majes-

tic and haughty, she overlooked them, and kept her eyes fixed on a very beautiful personage, at her right hand, who from his easy, composed mein, I guessed rightly to be Tranquility.

“ As I drew nearer, the cloud on the brow of Celibacy seemed to disperse, and I could observe in her, an air of serenity which had escaped my observation at a greater distance. Her whole form seemed more pleasing as I advanced, and I was already inclined to enlist under her banner,—when, on waving her hand, a youth approached, lovely as the blush of morning, and breathing the odours of the Spring,—his air was noble and disengaged, his countenance was flushed with health, and sparkled with vivacity and spirit—his flowing garments, which fluttered in the breeze, his careless locks, which floated in wanton ringlets on his shoulders, and the rod of manumission in his hand, discovered him to be Liberty.

“ I gave him my hand in a transport of plea-

sure, and he, with a smile of approbation, delivered me to Peace and Contentment, the constant companions of his steps, commanding them to lead me to the Temple of Happiness, which stood at an equal distance from the rival fanes of Celibacy and Marriage, and received indiscriminately from both, such as were introduced by the amiable pair, who were now my conductors. My joy at the command was so great as to break the fetters of sleep, and restore me to old age and wrinkles.

“ However, though my beauty vanished with my dream, I have the satisfaction of finding myself really accompanied by *peace* and *contentment*, as a proof of which I need only declare, that I am at this time of life, and in a state generally attended with spleen and ill-nature, one of the best-humored creatures breathing.”

One word as to the style of our work : It has been adopted after much consideration, and upon

the conviction that it is suited to the tone of our subject—and this must be our apology for any thing egotistical which may be found in it.



# INTRODUCTORY AND DEDICATORY

TO THE

## SISTERHOOD.

---

### CHAPTER I.

"Grows, lives, and dies, in single blessedness."

SHAKESPEARE.

WE take no little credit to ourselves in having buckled on our armour in defence of that neglected and maligned class of human beings, ycleped Old Maids. We have, however, a proud consciousness,



that our efforts will be rewarded by the smiles, and the waving of scarfs amongst our fair friends—and that having thrown down our gauntlet and periled our body against all comers denying the merit and beauty of our mistresses,—we shall find ourselves, at the close of our well-fought battle, kneeling before ‘*la reine de la jour*,’ half buried in a shower of artificial roses,—and our temples surrounded by a crown of victory, composed of laurel leaves, gemmed with the pearl-like blossoms of the chaste ‘*icicle flower*.’

Gentle and amiable beings!—the cold and selfish world, of which many of you are the purest ornaments, has succeeded, by means of sneers and ridicule, in making some amongst your ranks blush and feel ashamed of their ‘*envied situation*.’—Henceforth you shall boldly defy their sarcasms, we will provide you with serviceable weapons—we will show you the ‘*trick of fence*,’ and

with the buckler of your own untainted honor you shall go forth, like—

———“Gentle Una  
With her milk-white lamb,”—

strong in your own innocence, and smile at those ‘paper bullets of the brain,’ those ‘quips and cranks,’ which have hitherto been your sorest annoyance.

The task to which we have devoted ourselves is one of noble daring, and we are convinced will carry our name down to posterity, as the champion of a higher order of chivalry than that of the renowned Lancelot du Lac ; he lived in an age of enchantment, abounding in dragons, giants, sorceresses, fairies, and other ‘strange chimeras dire’ ; we live in an age of reason and matter of fact, and have nothing supernatural to diversify or relieve the current of common life ; he fought with spear and sword—we wield the pen ; he

delivered distressed damsels from castles and dungeons—we free them from the more galling chains of public opinion, and the thralldom of unmerited obloquy ; his was a victory of ‘ thews and sinews ’ and physical vigor—ours of intellect and morals ;—and as much as mind is superior to matter, so much higher do we esteem our honor.—With our shield of silver, blazoned with the ‘ lone bird of Araby,’ and our motto, ‘ Castitas et Felicitas,’ we come before you, nothing doubting but that we shall be hailed as the knight ‘ sans peur et sans reproche’ of the sisterhood,—a sisterhood as sacred and honorable, in our estimation, as the Vestals amongst the Romans, and the Daughters of the Sun in another hemisphere.

With this slight peroration, we beg leave to dedicate ourselves to your service. With spear in rest we pay our devoirs, and let our guerdon be your soft smiles, and fair looks ; these are the only tributes we crave from your hands—and

these will be rich rewards for the toils we have undergone. The heart of the Grecian warrior was not filled with prouder emotions, than will occupy our bosom, when we exclaim—

*“Χαίρετε Χαιρομεν,”*

and bending gracefully on our knee, receive the chaplet of honor—amidst the sighs and gratulation of a hundred-thousand soft voices. These shall convey our deeds and our fame to the uttermost ends of the earth—for glory is dear to the conqueror, and ‘love of ladies,’ the sacred flame that animates the courage of a true knight.

CLASSIFICATION  
OF  
OLD MAIDS.

---

CHAPTER II.

———"This is a task  
As full of labour as the wise man's art,"  
SHAKESPEARE.

ON the very threshold of our undertaking, we deem it essential to lay down some certain plans for our direction, lest we should bewilder ourselves in the labyrinth of conflicting claims for the aid of our pen.—If, like the Paladins of old, we run a tilt without knowing our antagonist, we

may chance to injure a friend, or at least an individual, against whom we have no ground of quarrel,—and, after having shivered our lance, may discover that our tourney can neither do honor to our proper person nor to our cause.

We tremble lest in exercising our discretion we should offend the dear mutabilities.—Guide thy votary, crescent-crowned Diana!—Judge us in charity ye virgins!—and should any amongst you imagine that your pretensions to peculiar excellence are less strongly insisted upon than in justice they merit—let our excuse be that which has been acceded to the wisest of men ‘*Nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit.*’

And here a very delicate question proposes itself: What is an Old Maid?—We had fairly mounted our courser—trumpets had sounded a fanfaron—and our heart was beating high, when the question flashed upon our mind,—“What is an Old Maid?” We looked around, and a hundred

fair faces were gleaming upon us—and we internally responded,—“ These are Old Maids.”—This for a moment satisfied us—but on looking more closely at the objects of our chivalrous regards, we discovered ‘ variety infinite,’ a vast parterre of flowers—some ‘ beautiful exceedingly,’ others still lovely, yet clad in ‘ Autumn’s sober hues,’ and many, chaste doubtless,—

—————“ As icicles,  
That hang on Dian’s Temple,”

but time-worn, and to all appearance so accustomed to ‘ wintry weather,’ that we might have hoped they had nothing to demand—no reparation to expect for ‘ time’s arrows’—from the arms of a young and gallant knight ; yet here they were congregated,—

“ Thick as the leaves in Vallambrosa,”

and casting upon us, as we careered before them,

many 'longing, lingering looks,' and obviously watching, with intense interest, the fluttering of our pennon, as if it were the gleaming 'Heron-tuft' of Ali, the father of Time himself.

Knight-errant as we were, we had sense enough to see at a single glance, that if all these were 'Old Maids,' the sorrows and oppressions under which they labored so universally, must be strangely diversified, and that an attempt to redress them seriatim, would be the work of a man, even should his life be prolonged like that of the wandering Jew. In our warm-hearted simplicity, we had supposed that they had formed a distinct species, having few or no varieties,—and that the grievances of which they complained were of general application,—and, consequently, that our single prowess, would have sufficed to prostrate to the dust their unworthy foes within a moderate space of time. But our examination, brief as it was, had convinced us that we had



suffered our enthusiasm to overleap our judgment. We felt conscious, at the first glance, that the flashing eye and downy cheeks of the beautiful amongst the vestals, must have a class of sufferings to contend with, of a far different character to those which were pressing upon the soft and meek-eyed Autumn Lilies—and that these again must have sources of grief, widely apart from the anxieties which agitated the Wintry bosoms of the more antiquated maidens.

This discovery filled us with perplexity, and in our confusion our courage quailed for a moment. Fortunately, however, for our own fame and the happiness of the sisterhood, our ardour was not of that ephemeral cast, which blooms a moment and then withers for ever ; on the contrary, when the first shock of surprise was over, we were filled with redoubled energy ; and as the importance of our task rose in magnitude, so did our determination increase in intensity.

Many profound reflections passed through our minds, during the several days we were occupied in solving the question,—“What is an Old Maid?”—Our own cogitations were fruitless,—we turned over numerous dusty and antique tomes—we half blinded ourselves with poring over black letter—we waded through several ponderous folios of the Fathers of the Church, and discovered many singular disquisitions on the ‘venerable nomen’ of Maid, but we found nothing in the shape of a general definition. It was clear that several monastic writers had a very sufficient knowledge of the subject in the abstract; nay, more than one of them afforded sufficient ground for belief—that they had acquired a very intimate acquaintance, with some particulars, apparently at variance with their professions. We learnt much by our search, but we did not learn what we wanted.

In this difficulty we turned from the dead to the living,—we summoned a council of the most

distinguished ' Old Maids ' of our acquaintance, and having proposed the question—" What is an Old Maid ?" we withdrew, while they deliberated, requesting they would favor us with a written opinion, to put an end to all future disputes upon such an interesting topic. Many hours passed away, evidently in the most vehement disputation, the sound of voices even penetrating into our sanctum, where we were reposing our wearied intellect, after the labors it had undergone, with skimming the pages of a modern courtly novel, and refreshing our inner man by imbibing a moderate quantum of genuine sherry of peculiarly fine flavor.

In a multitude of counsellors, it has been said, there is safety ; but in the present instance it turned out, as it has frequently done before, that in a multitude of counsellors there is no opinion, ' tot fæminæ quot sententiæ,' for, on sending a message to enquire if the ladies would wish for

candles or refreshments, we were informed that they had consulted to no purpose,\* and that they were on the point of breaking up in no very good humor, and to leave us in our troublesome dilemma.

This piece of ingratitude, we confess, struck us to the heart. After having declared ourselves the champion of Old Maidism, after having lamented its sorrows, and determined to devote ourself to their amelioration,—this incapacity or unwillingness to define strictly in what ‘Old Maidism’ consisted, by the very sisterhood itself, seemed

---

\* In order that our fair readers may not object to the indecision of our ‘Council of Maids,’ and declare it partial, we acquaint them that we include amongst our intimate friends, sixty-eight Old Maids, by confession—fifty three-quarter Old Maids—and eighty-six half Old Maids, according to their own nomenclature, and that our council consisted of the most distinguished ladies of each class.

the very essence of ingratitude,—a refinement of cruelty too exquisite to be borne, and for a time we yielded to despair. But the cause was too noble thus to be allowed to perish, and though severely mortified by what we looked upon as a species of desertion, our resolution soon returned, and being abandoned to our own resources, we seriously set ourself to the task of drawing up proper definitions and distinctions, founded upon oral and written authorities.—After many and serious deliberations,—after collating carefully every thing bearing on the subject, we succeeded in drawing up a projêt, which we then submitted to another council of ‘ Old Maids,’ and we are proud to say, they declared, *una voce*, that the wonderful knowledge we had displayed, respecting ‘ Old Maidism,’ entitled us to their utmost confidence. We were also highly delighted to perceive how naturally and good-temperedly they fell voluntarily under their respective classifications.

The smiles of gratitude which beamed upon us from all sides, when each individual found herself rescued from the ‘*rudis indigestaque moles*,’ and placed in her separate niche, and given a proper ‘*status*,’ made it one of the proudest moments of our life, and we exclaimed in our delight, that we had performed a work—

“ *Quod nec Jovis ira, nec ignes,  
Nec potuit ferrum, nec edax abolere, vetustas.*”

Our system was necessarily based upon that of Linnæus, but in subdividing our class we preferred the natural order of Jussieu, and arranged the whole into families, each having certain specific affinities; whilst the individual members of each division were distinguished by so many points of similarity as to fall easily under one definition.

We hesitated when we had perfected our scheme, whether we should not invent a peculiar phraseology whereby our subject might be distinguished

—but after much consideration this seemed too vulgar; for, turning to a celebrated work on Natural History, the mortification we experienced, on reading our own classification, decided the matter—‘Vertebrate Animals,—Class, Mammalia,—Genus, Homo,’ &c.—and the same definition, with the exception of a single word, we found applicable to a whole host of beasts of all kinds.

We repudiated, with a feeling amounting to disgust, such a summary mode of dealing with the best and loveliest of God’s creatures, and scouted a nomenclature founded upon such premises. We determined that something like decency should be preserved in classing that division of humanity which we had taken under our especial protection. Thus pondering, we turned over a variety of particulars as exclusively pertaining to our kind, and fixed upon the ‘Mens Divinior,’ as the foundation on which to build our superstructure. The following table was the result of much

patient thinking, and many consultations and deliberations with the Queen of literary Old Maids, Mrs. H—— M——. :

#### CLASS—OLD MAIDS.

Ladies who have passed their thirty-fifth year, calculated either from the parish register, or, if that be wanting, from the family bible, and who remain in a state of unimpeachable maidenhood, without any appearance of a matrimonial alliance,—unless such an appearance has been of ten years standing.

#### GENERIC DIVISIONS.

Genus I, Voluntary Old Maids.—Genus II, Involuntary Old Maids.—Genus III, Old Maids by Accident.—Genus IV, Inexplicable Old Maids,—Genus V, Literary Old Maids.



*Genus I* { Ladies whose extreme delicacy, or caution, or coldness, have determined them to live a life of celibacy; every opportunity having been afforded them for marriage.

*Genus II* { Ladies possessing every requisite for the connubial state, and who have been anxiously striving to attain it, but, notwithstanding, still remain in single blessedness. .

*Genus III* { Ladies eminently qualified for matrimonial duties, and who have been repeatedly engaged, but by some *accident* still remain Old Maids.

*Genus IV* { Ladies who remain in a state of virginity, but for which no earthly reason can be assigned.

*Genus V* Literary Old Maids.

These form the five great families into which the class of Old Maids conveniently arranges itself,—each and every one of these includes several species, and these species occasional varieties,—but we have thought it better to confine ourself, in this stage of our progress, to merely laying down the general outlines of Old Maidism; allowing the minor divisions and more minute shades of difference to be developed in the body of our work. “C’est le premier pas qui conte,” we have passed the Rubicon, and now to our task.

# OLD MAIDS

IN

GENERAL.

---

## CHAPTER III.

“Γνώθι Σεαυτόν.”

SELEN.

“Unknown to others we may be,  
But let us know ourselves.”

OLD TRANSLATION.

WE have defined an *Old Maid* to be “a lady who has attained the age of thirty-five years, with the reputation of irreproachable maidenhood.” We are free to confess that the date of this epoch was fixed with great difficulty, and that on the first announcement it excited a violent outcry, and a formidable schism amongst our fair friends.

Those amongst them whose ascertained duration of life was from thirty-five to forty-five, pleaded vehemently for a later date; whilst, on the contrary, those from forty-five upwards, were equally strenuous advocates for the infallibility of our dictum.

Much soothing was required to produce concord—all our powers of ‘fond persuasion’ were called into action to procure a fair hearing,—we convinced them, after much *sweet compliment* and cogent reasoning, after many apt quotations and well-applied example, that they were ‘bellicosissimæ’ upon an error of judgment.

The ‘auncient dames’ the Old Maids par excellence, who pertinaciously clung to the line of demarcation fixed by our wisdom, very mistakenly believed their ‘order’ to be one of contumely and reproach, and therefore upon the principle that ‘society is comfort,’ were anxious to have the insignia displayed upon as many sisters as possible; while the younger ones, whose

blood was still dancing joyously in their veins, acting upon the same erroneous opinion, stood jealously aloof, and seemed determined to put off what they considered the "evil day" to the very last minute.

If any thing had been wanting to give additional strength to our devotion to their cause, we should have found it on the present occasion. After we had expatiated at considerable length, and descanted with great feeling upon their true position; after having pointed out the undeniable advantages which they possessed, and dilated in a tone of affectionate solicitude on the many sources of happiness and comfort they enjoyed, it was in the highest degree gratifying to watch the gradual change which came over the assembly.

Hitherto its general aspect had been that of an April day, stormy and overcast; but now the clouds dispersed, and the soft and genial Spring sun shone with its brightest radiance. The countenances of the

self-acknowledged Old Maids underwent a delightful change ; their puckered and wrinkled appearances, and their harsh and vinegar expression, yielded before our eloquent appeal. Every face lost its austerity—each one looked upon her sister with an air of bland contentment, and a soft smile stole over their features ; their hearts were again opened—the icy mantle, which the coldness of the world had thrown around their womanly affections, thawed beneath our influence, and they were now—

“ Kind as the willing saints—and calmer far,  
Than in their sleep forgiven hermits are.”

Nor was the change in the younger division of the assembly less striking or less grateful. Eyes of a thousand hues, from the lustrous black of the raven’s wing, to the bright tint of “ the robe of pity”—yet all alike beautiful—and in which rode sparkling ‘ disdain and scorn,’ became meekly

tender—while arched eyebrows, fit for the bow of Cupid, and round which lurked the ‘loves and graces’ slowly unbent themselves, and dove-like simplicity sat throned on every alabaster forehead.

A tear of triumph and deep sensibility stole down our cheeks on witnessing these unequivocal proofs of the beneficial operation of our labors. We had reconciled the amiable creatures to themselves—August shook hands cordially with December, and the bare branch and waning leaf, when thus brought into juxta-position,—lent a new charm to each other.

Having happily reconciled the conflict of opinion on this delicate point, we proceeded to ascertain the particular attributes appertaining to an Old Maid, considered as the representative of her class,—and we candidly own that many difficulties were experienced.—Portraits were sketched from life of the most celebrated ‘antiques.’ The leading features were readily acknowledged, but in

filling up the more minute shades, we had to encounter a host of troubles, 'difficiles nugæ' tried our patience and devotion to the uttermost. The finesse and somewhat intangible nature of the disposition of 'lovely woman' were our worst enemies.

As a last resource we drew accurate delineations of the most opposite characters, studiously selecting standard and classic models—and then with wonderful perseverance we transferred the more important and characteristic traits to a sort of 'family portrait;' and, by repeated efforts, finally succeeded in working them up into an amalgam, blending hue and tint, smile and wrinkle, pucker and dimple, crows' feet and downy cheek, into one harmonious whole. The effect was prodigious, and the likeness pronounced admirable.

Each fair sister, with wonderful acuteness, took some peculiarity to herself; and yet all were satisfied with the whole. The more venerable dames were pleased to find themselves



in such good company. They had grieved for—

“ Sweetness shed—for beauty fled,”

and now again saw themselves brought upon the stage of life, freed from the rust and damp which had accumulated round them.—Like the paintings of a great master, which have lain neglected for years in the dust and obscurity of a garret, the very blemishes inflicted by the hand of time, became foils to their intrinsic excellence,—and thus it happened with our genuine Old Maids. Our touch acted like the spear of Ithuriel—they shook off the form of debasement, and stood proudly forth, rich in themselves.

Nor were the younger purities less pleased—the name and condition, which they had dreaded as a barren waste, without a single flower of human affection, or a single fountain of feminine passion, became at once a beautiful landscape of rich and

varied colors. Their foot no longer hesitated to cross the prescribed limit, their tongue no longer refused to utter their honorable distinction. With our portrait as their banner, they went joyously on their way, and gloried in the name of 'Old Maid.'

The following are the lineaments which determine our class,—and we take no small credit to ourself for their distinctness and copiousness. The race indeed, when viewed at random, appears perfectly Protean, and composed of infinite varieties.

To those who have occupied themselves with reducing general forms to specific details, our success, we are aware, will be a matter of surprise. When it is remembered that the prince of naturalists, Linnæus, was driven to the necessity of making a particular curve of the tail, a mark of distinction between wild and domesticated animals, and that the only addition made to this, since his time, by the many able and ingenious men who have followed the same pursuit, is a white spot to

be found upon the aforesaid tail—our superior discernment is at once apparent. The more ardent amongst our admirers will exclaim—

“*ὦ Τριumphe!*”

while the envious and carping, wishing to detract from our genius, may perhaps shrug the shoulder and say—

“*Ὁθῆ το παῖν.*”

We feel it incumbent to apologise here, to such of our readers as are not Old Maids, for our ‘style egare,’ and our ‘gossipred,’ (we love old names be it known as well as old ladies.) This is a habit we have acquired by our extensive and long-enduring intercourse with the ‘order’ whose champion we are—and for ‘their dear sakes,’ we have adopted it in the present work. Being

intended more particularly for their use, we deemed it but a matter of justice to mingle the 'utile et dulce,' so well displayed in their general conversation. This will, we are sure, satisfy all our gentle readers, who have not *professed*, and to our male friends "verbum sap:." Still we perceive, clearly enough, that if we are to continue our episodical and chatting mode, that 'long, though pleasing' must be our path, and we therefore plunge at once 'in medias res,' and describe an 'Old Maid.'

She is a being rich in all the rarer attributes of her sex,—a fact which has been concealed and hidden from the carping world, solely by its course and selfish opinion as to Old Maidism.—Her heart is a mine of sensibility, and it is not her fault if she is forced to expend its treasures on cats, china, or scandal.—Scouted and laughed at by the young as 'Aunt Jane, who is a cross Old Maid,' and debarred from the councils of the

old, as 'never having had experience, 'poor thing,' in family matters,'—she is driven back upon her own resources, and is necessitated to lavish her yearning affections upon dumb or insensible favorites.

Gentle creature! thine is a cruel fate!—and the coldness and indifference which is generally supposed to have steeled thee against the frailties and foibles of thy co-mates, has no existence but in the imagination of those who know thee not.

Love, or that longing and dreamy wish for companionship,—

“ That vehement but wandering fire,  
Which though nor love, nor yet desire,  
Though through all womankind it took  
Its range, as vague as lightning ran,  
Yet wanted but a touch—a look—  
To fix it burning upon one,”—

lives and glows in her bosom, with still greater intensity, that hitherto no object has been found

worthy to receive the gush of her awakened susceptibilities.

Time, indeed, which levels the palace and the cottage—which looks upon the bursting rose-bud, and sees the hour of its decay—which nurses the ‘hermit lily,’ watches it unfold its beauties, beneath the shelter of its buckler-like spathe—and sees also the noon of its glory, and its drooping head and withered stem—is also witness to the development of the principle of love in the soul of an Old Maid—sees its meridian splendour, and its evening softness. Though the outward form may change,—though ‘the soul’s palace’ may yield to the influence of ‘Father Time,’—though the loveliness of her younger years may have fled, for then ‘she walked in beauty like the morn,’—though her figure may have lost that exquisite symmetry and grace, which made her ‘the admired of all observers,’—though her eye may not now speak with the same eloquent glance

which told, in a single look, the whole history of woman's mysterious imaginings—though the 'passionate tear' no longer swells her quivering eyelid, telling—

———"That more loving dust  
Ne'er wept beneath the skies,"—

though these are lost, the principle of love still lives—shrined within her heart.

Her delicacy, her refinement, her almost spiritualised tenderness, have prevented her bestowing her affections upon the coarse and grosser animals of the opposite sex; who have sneered at her maidenly bashfulness—laughed at her womanly scruples—and now scorn her as an Old Maid. Her passions and affections have been thus reserved—no unworthy husband has hardened her heart and deadened her sensibilities—no ungrateful child has wrung tears of bitter agony from her tortured brain, turning—

“ All a mother's pains and benefits  
To laughter and contempt, to make her feel  
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is—  
To have a thankless child.”—

No, the better and purer portions still live, and will bear ‘golden fruit,’ when freed from the crust of lava, in which the world's coldness has shrouded them.—Let this barrier be removed—and the Old Maid will show that the fire, though hidden, is not extinguished,—that the sacred lamp still burns, purified from its more earthly qualities, though it no longer blazes with that intensity of passion, which makes the heart sick with its longings.

She looks back upon her youthful desires and hopes, as upon the memory of an intoxicating dream, filled with visions of happiness and of unutterable delight, and which the waking realities of life have long since convinced her, were indeed but visions.—She looks abroad upon those who



entered the career of existence with her, and she beholds a mingled picture of joy and woe.

On the one hand—the emaciated cheek, the tottering step, and the hollow and sunken eye, proclaim the victim of indulged happiness.—On the other—the compressed lip, and the contracted brow, speak of blighted affection, or despised love.—On a third—the young mother hangs over the couch of her first-born, and best beloved—wearying Heaven with vain prayers, that the innocent sufferer may be spared to her doating heart, till she is borne away frantic and insensible from the death-bed of her darling child.—On another—she beholds love turned to the most implacable hatred, her friend converted into a fiend, the husband into a cruel and tyrannous master, or dark suspicion and unfounded jealousy, riving both heart and brain, and rendering love a horrible curse.—

" Oh, Jealousy—thou raging ill,  
Why hast thou found a place in lover's hearts ?  
Afflicting what thou can'st not kill,  
And poisoning Love himself, with his own darts."

On all sides she sees strife, dissention, and misery,—warm hearts chilled,—bright eyes dimmed,—beauty wasted,—love destroyed,—the canker-worm of care nestling in cheeks, every dimple of which was once the strong-hold of Cupid,—' hopes and fears that kindle hopes,' crushed and blasted—minds once redolent of every thing sweet and blessed in nature, now a chaos of ruin and desolation. Such are the sights that meet the Old Maid, and happy should she be, that she has escaped from toils and snares so fearful and destructive.

But her life is the oasis of the desert—her heart is a welling fountain of the purest sympathies—her home is sheltered by the palm-trees of content—and she treads her little round

of existence on a verdant carpet, chequered with light and shade, and 'damask'd with crocus, hyacinth and violet in rich inlay,'—For her—

"No blasts e're discompose the peaceful sky,  
The springs but murmur, and the winds but sigh."

If she does not taste those delights which flow from happy marriage (and there are many such), when two individuals with moderate desires, and virtuous and well-tempered wishes, combine to produce 'one harmony of bliss,' she invariably shows how correctly she estimates so delightful a consummation,—for where household harmony *does* reign, there may the Old Maid be found in all her glory, mingling sweet with sweet, and her heart and affections expanding beneath its genial influence.—Domestic strife is a Tartarus from which she flies, it is a plague-spot, warning her to depart—but if a father or mother has

reached the extreme verge of senility, there she may be seen hovering like a guardian angel, developing in this trying emergency all her treasured affections, and lavishing them on insensible or querulous old age, with all the vigor, the tenderness, and devotedness of a young bride, watching over the shattered health of an adored husband.

Such, gentle reader, is an Old Maid. Acknowledge that thou hast done her great injustice—that thou hast viewed her as a selfish, envious, ill-natured, affected, credulous and curious creature, a fit object for mirth, a standing family jest, suited only to play a conspicuous part at funerals and births, and having none of the finer sympathies which thou supposest to be locked in thine own breast. Acknowledge that thou hast considered a relation, if an Old Maid, and poor, as suited to a by-corner in thy domicile, there condemned to spend her time in darning old clothes,

and knitting stockings or 'comfortables,' as the 'ame damnée' of thy family, a licensed plaything for thy children, and nurse-general for thyself, thy wife, and thy offspring.—That if rich, thou hast invited her to set dinners and card-parties; hast permitted thy young hopefuls to visit her but rarely, and then with an especial injunction to avoid treading on the cat's-tail, choking her parrot with apricot-stones, or lengthening the tail of her pet poodle, by appending thereto an addition, in the shape of an old can or kettle,—to shun her china cabinet, to meddle not with the 'little monsters' on her mantel-piece, to wipe their shoes twice before entering her drawing-room, to keep their plates well under their chins, when seated at table, lest gravy or plum should escape upon her 'snow-white napery,' and threatening death and destruction to Tom and Mary, if they amuse themselves with pulling faces, and 'doing the pretty,' to

imitate their Aunt's peculiarities; an intimation which, it is ten to one, the mischievous monkeys overlook—as thou art conscious, friend, that such is a favorite pastime of thine own, and thy spouse's at home—notwithstanding thou hast been twice saved from jail, by Sister Margaret's generosity, and that two of thy oldest children are now at a respectable boarding-school, the expense of which is borne by the same selfish and ill-natured Old Maid. Or, can'st thou gainsay this, by charging Aunt Jane with stinginess and affectation, because she resides in a small cottage, and supports herself in decency and comfort, on her annuity of fifty pounds per annum. Look, gentle reader, on 'this picture and on that,—' is it not 'Hyperion to a Satyr;' and blush for having considered an Old Maid as something that she is not.

Dear amiabilities! can we wonder that you are kind nurses—or that you are fond of cats, dogs,

parrots and Chinese monsters? Is it not thus that you are forced to display your pent-up sensibilities? Something you must love—your hearts are overflowing with milk and honey; but mankind, blind to your amiable qualities, meet your advances, as if their most deadly enemies were making covert approaches to destroy their sanctuaries.

This is prejudice—fatal and perverse prejudice—and it is our task to display you in your natural colors; we will show you as beings to be loved and cherished; the screen that has separated you from the world shall be removed—you shall assume your place in society, stainless and pure as you are, '*les sœurs de la chastité*;' old and young shall welcome you, and henceforward, no tinge of shame shall steal over your cheeks at being greeted as Old Maids

## VOLUNTARY OLD MAIDS.

---

### CHAPTER IV.

"Ut sit virginitas aurum, castitas argentum, jugalitas, myramentum; ut sit virginitas divitiæ, castitas medioeritas, jugalitas captivitas; ut sit virginitas sol, castitas luna, jugalitas tenebræ; ut sit virginitas dies, castitas aurora, jugalitas nox."—P. ADUEL: LIS: DE VIRG.

FIRST in honor and in place come the Voluntary Old Maids—those, who, having birth, beauty, accomplishments and opportunity, have, of their own free will, clothed themselves in white. A noble bevy—with contemplative brows—eyes of subdued brilliancy—and a lofty bearing, denoting



a consciousness of their claims to distinguished honor.

And thou, fair maiden, upon whom thirty-five summer suns have already shone, each one in succession maturing some new charm; well hast thou earned thy title to the name of Voluntary Old Maid.—Art thou not beautiful? yea beautiful exceedingly?—and is there not within thy dark and lustrous eye, the very temple of love?—art thou not a—

“Bright star of beauty, on whose eyelids sit  
A thousand nymph-like and enamor'd graces?”

and does not thy soft smile tell—

“Thoughts of young love—?”

Yes thou art a gem, peerless in thy loveliness.—  
The very sun-shine of delight dwells on thy features, and thy bosom throbs with hopes and

fears most feminine,—and yet thou art a Voluntary Old Maid.

The fierce and burning love of the noblest in the land has beset thee from the first dawn of womanhood. The statesman and the warrior have contended for thy favor; the poet and the painter have invoked the sister arts to twine a wreath for thy brows—praise and flattery—prayer and supplication have environed thee; but chastity was throned in thy heart, and her asbestos mantle has preserved thee to be the glory and grace of our ‘order.’

A Voluntary Old Maid is a splendid object for contemplation—and it is a proud and gratifying truth, that many Old Maids are in this distinguished class of professors. The calumnious assertions so generally made, that the state of celibacy is not one of choice, but of bitter compulsion, is a part of the slanders that have been current respecting our amiable friends. Man, ‘proud man,’

strutting about in his fancied superiority, and proud of his self-assumed distinction of Lord of the Creation, would fain persuade himself, that in the omnipotence of his pretensions, he may sing 'Iō triumphe,' and flatters himself with the idea, that he has only to offer his hand to the best and purest of God's creatures, and it will be seized upon as a boon.—Vain illusion,—he bears not on his crest 'veni, vidi, vici.'—In this respect his counterpart is the peacock, which spreads forth his gorgeous tail, glancing in the sun-light, when a scream, believed, no doubt, by the sapient bird, to be 'melody divine,' startles the observer into a conviction that something more than pretension is requisite to make a household bird—and thus is it with man.

There is, without doubt, implanted in the breast of all women, a passionate longing—an almost irrepressible desire, for the society and companionship of man. It is an instinct woven into their moral

and physical structure,—it is a passion which grows with their growth, and strengthens with their strength. It has mingled with their dreams, and formed the subject of their mid-day reveries.

The bashful maiden, whose deep fringed eyelids half conceal the liquid lustre of her hazel eyes, seats herself pensively, away from observation, perchance, in the deep recess of some gothic window, or on some grassy bank, arched overhead by the 'giants of the wood,' and there is a voice and a mystery around her.—This is the 'spirit of Love, felt every where;' it finds a kindred feeling in the breast of the coy maiden, and, in luxurious meditation, she lives in the space of one brief hour a life of love.—But the maiden is not alone in her solitude—her heart is filled with the image of some ideal being created by her heated fancy.—It comes at her bidding, shadowy and unreal, and she steeps her soul in tenderness, and with enamored accents of delight betrays how

profound, how intense and overpowering is the desire to love and to be loved. It requires only that some congenial spirit shall approach her, and the whole torrent of her affections will be let loose upon him; one touch, or one look that stirred the chord of her feelings, would fix her destiny; any incident, however trivial, that developed a correspondent tone of sensibility in one of the opposite sex, would make him the idol of her young heart,—and yet this creature, whose very frame is love, lives and dies an Old Maid.

The passions that are coursing through her veins, may indeed re-act fearfully upon herself;—her face may blanch—her eye may lose some portion of its brightness—her step may become less elastic—and tender melancholy may invest her with a double charm. But year after year rolls over her head, and finds her still ‘in maiden meditation.’ Her friends, one by one, visit the Hymeneal Altar; perhaps her own sisters, amongst whom she is ‘the bright, the

fair one,' become brides.—She rejects offer after offer, and, at length, is marked out by her family as an 'Old Maid,' who wonder why Mr. So-and-so was rejected—an excellent man—good fortune, &c., &c.,—and delicately hint, that she had better 'have made hay while the sun shone.'

Gentle creature, thou hast preserved in all their pristine purity, thy feminine attributes—thou hast brooded so long over the love dwelling in thy heart—that man's cold, selfish and calculating affection, is utterly unworthy thy acceptance. The *one* who could alone have fixed thy vehement longing—has never appeared; thou art too pure, too good, too holy for those who would have wedded thee, for thy heart would have broken, and thou would'st have sunk into a premature grave, when the sad truth had come upon thee—that man's tenderness, devotion and admiration, are changeable and perishable. When thou hadst left thy quiet home, and fixed thine affections so firmly that

to break the bond would have been destruction, thou would'st have found, 'that one was lost in certainty and one in joy;' and then thou would'st have pined and withered like a beautiful exotic, removed from its own bright clime to another region, where factitious heat and unnatural stimuli are made to supply the want of the pure and invigorating rays of its native Sun. The struggle has been severe, but thou hast triumphed nobly over sensual temptations—thou hast kept in all its integrity the 'sea of love,' whose turbulent heavings disturbed thy young imaginations; and it is now ready to overflow on every deserving thing that comes before thee. Thy sisters and friends smile at thy philanthropy, and sneer at thy simplicity; for their love and their singleness of purpose have either evaporated, or have assumed a direction widely apart from those golden hopes and joys which 'maidens dream of, when they think of love.'—These thou hast kept in all their original brightness, and now, though

the frost of forty winters has pressed upon thee, thou art still a maiden—in mind and heart.

The peculiarities of voluntary Old Maids are of the most amiable character. Their delicacy and sensibility have removed them from the cold philosophy of the world—they are nature's children, have a smile for the gay—a tear for pity—an universal benevolence—and a hand open as day to melting charity. Their weaknesses are even amiabilities—and their little distresses more touching than the misfortunes of others.

Does a voluntary Old Maid hear of some unhappy friend, whom the fates have unkindly driven to destitution, her innocent temper suggests no inquiries as to whether the sufferer is the victim of her own faults, or the faults of others; but she waits upon her, relieves her condition, goes abroad into society, details her account of the unfortunate, and is met with exclamations of wonder and uplifted hands—and hears, to her dismay, a



history of improprieties, and is lucky if she escape *inuendos* herself.—Again, some one of her early admirers, whom her dignity and pride of self had rejected, having married another less high-minded and chaste, has fallen into distress—a young family, a sick wife, a ruined fortune, and impending poverty threaten to crush him to the earth, and scatter his family as outcasts and miserables, upon the cold and calculating world.—She learns all this, visits the house of woe, sees him, who, in the days of his prosperity, deemed himself little less than a god, now grovelling in the dust, and the sluices of that love which he could not open then, roll back and embrace the entire family. The beautiful woman becomes a saint—she was worshipped once as a creature of clay, fitted for earthly love,—she is worshipped now, as a superior being, possessing angelic attributes.—But again society upbraids her, and imputes false motives to her actions. Base slander! her motives are as pure

as unsunned snow, and originate in the impulses of 'the spirit of love,' which exists in undiminished splendor within her.

—————"To him that dares  
Arm his profane tongue, with contemptuous words,  
Against the sun-clad power of chastity,"—

we throw down the gauntlet of mortal defiance—  
and tell him to his teeth, that he knows nothing of  
the 'high mystery' of Old Maidism.

"So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity,  
That when a soul is found sincerely so,  
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,  
Driving far off each thing of guilt and sin :  
And in clear dream and solemn vision,  
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear,  
Till oft converse with Heavenly habitants,  
Begin to cast a beam on th' outward shape,  
The unpolluted temple of the mind,  
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,  
Till all be made immortal."

Thus it is that the Voluntary Old Maid becomes freed from the grosser passions and influences of common mortality; year after year robs her of some portion of that impurity which disgraces our immortal nature, and lifts her nearer and nearer to angelic perfection. How shall the world dare then to stigmatise her actions, and laugh at what its blindness deems her foibles—they are impulses heaven-born; and her simplicity, guileless as that of a little child, is the best proof of her immeasurable superiority.

Virginity, in all ages and in all countries, has been peculiarly dedicated to the gods, its pure hands being esteemed the best fitted to offer sacrifices. Rome, in the old world, had its Vestals; and the Peruvians, in the new, their ‘ Daughters of the Sun;’ and even amongst our barbarous ancestors, it was a part of their religious creed, that the virgin who died chaste, was equally to be honored with the warrior who fell in battle, and admitted,

at once, into their Valhalla, and even ranked as goddesses. The early Christian Fathers exhausted their learning and eloquence in praise of voluntary virginity. St. Cyprian said that the reward of virginity is glorious, and that to preserve its purity approaches very near to the perseverance of martyrdom.\* And the still more celebrated St. Athanasius gives a splendid panegyric to virginity, declaring that it is a precious pearl, hidden from the multitude, and found, indeed, only by the few select ones.† The same lofty praise is given to this condition by St. Basil, St. Gregory, and other Christian bishops and saints.

Nor were the polished and subtle Greeks, in the

---

\* “Quarum ad gloriam merces secunda est, sit et virtus ad tolerantiam proxima.”—*De Habit. Virg.*

† “Ὁ παρθενία μαργαρίτα τιμή, &c.”

best periods of their intellectual celebrity, behind their heathen neighbours in singing the praise of voluntary virginity, nor less eloquent in their declamations than the pious Fathers of our Church. Chastity passed among them as a divinity, and as something ever to be held sacred. Those who professed it were denominated demigods; implying by this, that those who live in a virgin state are in some sort, celestial beings.—It was a virtue looked upon as a supernatural grace.—‘*Et plus quam fœminâ virgo!*’—a ‘*Virgin!* how much better than a wife!’ and they declared that ‘*Casta placent superis,*’ signifying that the gods were delighted with chastity.

Thus has voluntary Old Maidism ever been considered as one of the noblest conditions of humanity. Though we are not descendants of the Incas, nor worshippers of Vesta, Minerva or Diana, and though we doubt the wisdom of the monastic institutions, and would not clothe our

sweet friends in sackcloth, and shut them up in nunneries, our admiration and veneration for the 'order,' is not less than that entertained by the feather-cinctured Indian, the Grecian platonist, the Roman pontiff, or the Christian saint; and we would devote voluntary Old Maids to an office as noble as any to which their services have been dedicated.—We would make them our household divinities, our Lares, our Dii Pœnates—for are they not the emblems of chastity and modesty, and what safer protection can there be for family virtue than these?—Yes, we would elevate them from their debasement, place them upon a pedestal of adamant, and look upon them as the stainless models of social life. Let it be—

——“ Theirs to clasp, each selfish care above,  
A sister's orphans with maternal love,  
And all her tender offices supply,  
Though bound not by the strong maternal tie;  
And theirs to bid intestine quarrels cease,  
And form the cement of domestic peace;

No throbbing joy their spotless bosom fires,  
Save what Benevolence alone inspires;  
No praise to seek, except that praise refin'd,  
Which the heart whispers to the worthy mind."

Amongst the thousands of these precious anti-ques, there may probably be a few whom constitutional frigidity, and not the nobler essence of chastity, has induced to remain in single blessedness.—This, we say, may be the case, and, if so, they are of course excepted from our eulogistic remarks; we, ourselves, have some doubts upon this head, and could say a great deal on both sides, but that it is a discussion which would be misplaced here.—We, however, do not consider *that* as a virtue, which is the result of mere insensibility. If any, therefore, of our fair readers, who have scanned our pages with rejoicings and thankfulness, are sensible that they owe their 'proud eminence' to this cause, we beg leave to assure them, that they form a class

'sui generis,' a class which owes its dignity to reflected light, from the shrine of genuine voluntary Old Maidism, and not from the fact that they, themselves, are 'auncient virgins.'—Glory is in conquest—'tis one thing to be tempted—another to be incapable of temptation; and though these may have refused offers innumerable, the principle has been as different as light from darkness, compared with that which governed their compeers.—They have regulated their actions by considerations of prudence, and cold calculations, as to external advantages, whilst the passions, the affections, a maiden's hopes and wishes, had nothing whatever to do with the matter. Their cares were of the earth—earthly; they had none of the 'aura sacra,' which envelopes the being of the trembling and sensitive woman; their thoughts were low and grovelling, and most probably turned on mere 'yellow dust,' and they were, doubtless, utterly unconscious of the noble



sentiments which warmed the bosom of the voluntary Old Maid, par excellence.—They knew nothing of—

—————“ Those trembling fires,  
Like Vesta's ever burning—and like hers,  
Sacred to thoughts immaculate and pure.”

They are Old Maids indeed, but Old Maids of a vastly inferior grade to those whom we delight to honor; they want the true stamp of nobility—the ‘ mens diviniar.’

All hail then, ye voluntary Old Maids! chastity has been your safeguard! love your companion! your reward is a pure heart and an unsullied conscience. Thrice blessed are ye—and thrice happy—‘ Vos valet et plaudite.’

## INVOLUNTARY OLD MAIDS.

---

### CHAPTER V.

—————"What's the matter,  
That you have such a February face,  
So full of frost—of storm—of cloudiness?"

SHAKESPEARE.

"Phillis had a gentle heart,  
Willing to the lover's courting."

DRYDEN.

Our second genus consists of Involuntary Old Maids. These are ladies who possessing, or having possessed, every requisite for the conubial state, and anxiously desirous of attaining it, have, nevertheless, passed the prescribed boundary, and still remain in single blessedness; vain

have been their attempts to impose upon themselves the 'jugum maritalæ,' though no stone has been left unturned; and though all a woman's wit and ingenuity have been actively employed on the subject, since the periods of the 'budding breast.'

The pensive and expectant nymphs have ridden, hour after hour, sea-side Jennets, alias donkeys, in hopes that their own graces, so admirably set off by the paces of the sagacious and sure-footed quadrupeds, might strike some wandering Lothario; assemblies have been visited—pic-nic parties made up, with especial reference to a 'chance,'—fashionable churches regularly attended—balls and quadrille parties sedulously sought after—theatres and all places of public amusement diligently beaten for game—the streets paraded—shady lanes and murmuring streams haunted—dress and undress have been tried—the drawing-room and the boudoir—the dining-

room and the library—the sitting-room—and the front window.

Music has been cultivated to fascinate the reluctant ear—painting to captivate the eye—and dancing to enrapture the touch ; botany has been studied as an excuse for solitary walks and maiden musing—geology for a rocky nook or a secluded pass—astronomy, that the ‘ silent hour of night, and the star of love,’ might produce their wished-for influence—poetry has been read to select tender and touching passages—and history to quote examples of woman’s undying affection ;—attitudes have been studied—sighs practised—fainting simulated—and a fountain of tears, sacred to dear sensibility, has been most conveniently arranged to pour out on all fitting occasions—

“ A shower of glittering pearls.”

No chance, however remote, has been neglected, when some fondly supposed admirer—‘ might unfold the passion of his love ;’ scheme upon

scheme has been contrived to aim aright ' the rich golden shaft,'—songs have been warbled with soft expectation that they would—

———" Give a very echo to the seat  
Where love sits throned."

The cunning of their passion has betrayed them into ' dewy looks,' surely, all-sufficient to melt a heart of ' triple brass ;' and the vow of eternal truth has been quivering upon their lips, waiting for a signal, however slight, to be ' registered in Heaven.'—Alas—

" Vain—vain have been their wiles—all vain their tears."

They have ' never told their love,' for nobody has been found to listen,—they have never  
sword—

———" By the roses of the spring,  
By maidhood—honor—truth—and every thing—  
I love thee !"

for none would receive their vow.

Nor have the efforts of 'Involuntary Maidens' stopped here;—charms and divinations have been tried—Pyromancy—Hydromancy—Theomancy—Psychomancy—Bottonomancy—Oneiromancy—Onomatomancy—Auromancy—Suphromancy—Canomancy—Cartomancy—Astragalomancy—Crithomancy—Giromancy—Lampadomancy; with characts and periapts—love-powders and true-lover's knots; one and all have they called to their aid, to lead them to a knowledge of the 'dear man.'

They have sat over the grounds of coffee and the refuse of tea, full of inspiration; and solemnly examining the circles produced by their own fair hands, have fancied, lordly figures and gallant men, to be pictured forth 'to the life,'—forgetting in the simplicity of their hearts, the old rhyme that

"As the fool thinks, so the bell chinks,  
As the bell chinks, so the fool thinks."

They have gone abroad in the Spring sun-light,  
and sought out the graceful ash—the 'Venus of the  
woods'—plucked an even leaf, and murmuring the  
mystic couplet—

"The even ash-leaf in my hand,  
The first I meet shall be my man ;"

and then placed it within their glove and continued  
their soft conjuration—

"The even ash-leaf in my glove,  
The first I meet shall be my love ;"

and finally depositing it upon their snow-white and  
throbbing bosom, have quietly whispered—

"The even ash-leaf in my bosom,  
The first I meet shall be my husband."

They have walked through the garden on mid-  
summer eve, and have scattered hemp-seed over  
their right shoulder, muttering half in hope, half  
in fear—

"Hemp-seed I wet, hemp-seed I sow,  
The man that is my true love come after me and mow;"

and many a light foot has tottered, and many a bold heart has quailed in performing the mystic rite. They have travelled over meadow and field, and plucked the daisy, 'the eye of day;' and pulling off its petals one by one, repeated at each, the name of some wished-for being, and have fondly persuaded themselves that the last petal, and the last name were the Sybilline Oracle. They have appealed to 'Ladye Moon' when her crescent has first appeared in the sky, and invoked her power, saying:—

"New moon—new moon—I hail thee!  
By all the virtue in thy body;  
Grant this night that I may see,  
He who my true love is to be."

They have placed their shoes by their bedsides at right angles, turned round three times, and in place of kneeling down and saying their accustomed



prayer, whispered to their 'pillow, the companion of their sighs'—

"Hoping this night my true love to see,  
I place my shoes in the form of a T."

They have risen with the first blush of 'rosy morn,' on St. Valentine's Day, and have sat with anxious foreboding, to see the first man, who in that fated hour should greet their longing eye; and days and months have they consoled themselves with the remembrance, repeating whenever he has appeared:—

"Thee first I spied, and the first swain we see,  
In spite of fortune shall my true love be."

They have surreptitiously obtained the handkerchief, shoe-tie, or garter of some desired one, and twining it with their own, have murmured in 'accents sweet'—

"Three times a true love's knot I tie secure,  
Firm be the knot—firm may his love endure."

They have wandered out in quiet twilight when

all nature is seeking repose, and praying the skiey influences to be propitious, have pressed the box or bay leaf within their hands, and have heard a voice as full of meaning as that breathed from the Dodonænan grove, in the crackling of the frail leaf; or they have carried these to their houses, and throwing them in the fire, have watched the contortions of the burning vegetable, with as firm a reliance upon its powers of divination, as the Roman Aruspex felt in the flight of the sacred pigeons; or in the death-scene of the beast of sacrifice.

They have sought the gipsy mother, or the cunning woman, and having crossed her palm with silver, have been shewn their future lovers in magic mirrors, or bowls of fairy-water; they have submitted their delicate hands to the bleared eyes of the priestess of Venus; and she has traced the line of love proceeding from the Hill of Venus, and closely accompanying the line of life, and announced to them, the gratifying intelligence,

that they shall be loved to their hearts content, for so it is written in the book of fate. They have stood at the hour of 'mirk midnight,' and invoking bright 'Hesper' now trembling on the verge of the horizon, have said :—

"Come, lover, come,  
Come, lover, come,  
Gentle Mary waits thee here,  
Come, lover, come."

Alas ! and well-a-day ; charms and divinations ; poetry and painting ; music and melancholy ; grace and gaiety ; the witchcraft that dwells in womans' tear ; the magic of her sigh ; astrology, geology, and necromancy, have been alike in vain ; vain too have been all their little feminine arts of allure-ment :—

"Nunquam et latentis proditor intimo,  
Gratus puellæ ricus ab angulo,  
Piquasve deceptum læstis,  
Aut digito male pertinaci."

and disappointment and the sickness of hope delayed, have gradually crept over the heart of the Involuntary Maidens ; they have indeed long kept the 'fiend despair' at bay ; and though they 'have never told their love,' they have not suffered 'concealment like a worm,' 'i' th' bud' ; to feed upon their damask cheeks.' Though they have pined in thought, no 'green and yellow melancholy' has marked them for 'its own' ; neither have they sat 'like patience on a monument, smiling at grief' ; no—no ; one hope blighted, another has risen in its stead. One promising field, from the cultivation of which, nothing but tares have resulted, has been abandoned only to seek another. One flattering prospect clouded, a gleam of sunshine has been found illuminating some other tempting spots ; and thus for twenty Summers have they toiled in vain. The labors of the Danaïides were not more fruitless ; the stone of Sisyphus not more perverse. They have striven vigorously ; but they have only illus-

trated the Roman adage, 'Oeni funiculum torquere.'

Fair creatures, let not discontent cloud your brows ; let not sadness, or a still more bitter feeling poison your cup of life :—

" Cease to lament for what ye cannot help,  
And study help for that ye now lament—  
Time is the nurse and breeder of all good."

Let not the remembrance of the failure of your well-meant efforts torment you.—You have done your best, and no mortal can do more.—Let not the ' *veteris vestigia flammæ* ' corrode your gentle natures—for your fame and your sufferings shall—

" —————be borne abroad upon  
The winds of heaven ;  
Nor be polluted more by human hands."

Dry your tears ; smooth your visages ; let no wrinkle or pucker deform those ' maps of heaven '—let your voice cease its discordant treble, and let

it breathe 'softened sounds' like a well strung harp, touched by 'dreaming maiden.' You have passed the boundary, let not the dreams of green girlhood still exist in your breasts. Then it was allowable—

“——to sit, and sigh,  
And think of things unknown.”

Let nobler contemplations now fill your minds ;  
you have escaped the possibility of a great and  
lasting evil ; enjoy in thankfulness the good the  
gods 'have provided you'—nor deem that the di-  
vinity presiding over mortal love, feeds his follow-  
ers with immortal roses—

“ Con flor que siempre nace  
Y quanto mas se goza, mas renace.”

or that its influences are ever—

“ Soft as the down of Cytherea's doves,  
Or snows that fall upon a tranquil sea.”

Your hearts have indeed long glowed with the 'fire that consumes not'—and willingly would you have laid them as an oblation upon the altar of human passion. Pine not, that your offering has been rejected, but rejoice rather, that you have passed the 'bridge of sighs' unfettered; and glory in the name of your 'order.' We, your devoted champion tell you

"That peace on earth begins, when love has bid farewell,"

and well are we qualified to uphold your cause; for

"We've known, if mortal ever knew, the pangs of beauty's thrall."

and we have abjured them; aye, and for ever; nor would we exchange our present 'halcyon calm of soul,' for all the turbulent and fleeting joys that beauty or gratified desire can bestow.

Blush not therefore, ye antiquated spinsters.—If you have not earned the crown matrimonial you

have earned the crown of Old Maidism; and we honor you, although your titular dignity is involuntary. Bind your brows with a coronet of laurel leaves; weave a chaplet of its ever-green leaves; and may the chaste spirit of the lovely Daphne, infuse itself into your minds,—she who

“ By many suitors sought, yet mocked their pains,  
And still her vow'd virginity maintains.”

Braid your hair, ‘à la virgine,’ and envy not your friends who sing within your hearing, ‘Hymen, O Hymenee,’—They are but commencing a troublous career, while you have passed the stormy gulf of passionate life, and though the roar of its surge breaking upon the rocks of disappointment, may sound musical, now the danger is past, rejoice that you are landed on the shores of Old Maidism, with all your virgin treasures safe.—You have followed the lamp of desire, which, like ‘a Will-o’-the-Wisp’ has led you into a thousand perilous

.



situations.—Look back and be thankful that you have escaped the snares of the tempter.—You have been anxiously desirous to lose your precious liberty—to make a probable shipwreck of your happiness ; to give up the thousand gay dreams that have filled your imagination, and to exchange them for a dull reality that might have made you weep bitter tears. Exercise your ingenuity my sweet friends, (for this is one of your amiable qualities), upon the following charade, and derive consolation from the important truth which it develops—

“ Mon premier est un tyran,  
Mon second un monstre,  
Et mon tout est le diable.”

You have lost the fight into which you rashly adventured ; but victory might have wrought you sorrow and woe,—and defeat has exposed you to no hostile depredation. The shield of your honor

.

is untouched—your fair fame unsoiled ; you have no longer to fear aggression ; the domain of Old Maidism is won,—cultivate it, and it will yield fruit of excellent savour. It has fountains of milk and honey ; touch them with the wand of contentment, and they will gush forth in abundance.

The truth however must be spoken ; it is principally in the genus of ‘ Involuntary Old Maidism,’ that examples are to be found of envious ill-nature ; of malicious carping ; of prying curiosity, and of restless *tracasserie*, which have most unjustly been considered as especial characteristics of the entire body of Old Maids.

Voluntary Old Maids, those ‘ pearls above all price,’ seldom obtrude themselves upon notice. True to their own chaste dignity, they move in a little orbit of their own ; scattering flowers and incense around them, while a few of the disappointed spinsters, dead alike to delicacy and propriety, are eter-

.

nally and officiously intermeddling. No wedding is on the tapis, but they are at once on the gad, pestering the bridegroom elect with impertinent enquiries.—No family quarrel is hinted at darkly, but the news-vending maiden may be seen scouring the neighbourhood, to collect and disseminate scandal.—No ‘erring child of clay’ is detected in some unfortunate amour, but their throats are set up like a chorus of screech-owls.—No child is born within the sphere of their intelligence, but a likeness is straightway discovered of some ‘friend of the family.’—No man falls into difficulties, but his innocent and sorrowing wife is visited by the fiend-like sympathy of these cankered specimens of mortality—And such things, we grieve to say, have thrown a stain upon our ‘order.’

Antiquated Maidens! throw aside this unbecoming spleen—visit not your young acquaintances about to marry, in order to annoy them with ques-

tions, as to how they have managed their matters,  
—and to shew your ill-concealed spitefulness.—  
Sigh not

*“Eheu me miseram ! cur non aut hæc mihi  
Ætas et forma est, aut tibi hæc sententia !”*

‘Ah, me miserable ! Why have I not your youth and beauty ?—or why had I not your judgment ?’—Why regret that which cannot now be helped—and why bind yourselves on the wheel of Ixion, suffering the idea of an unreal pleasure to be your constant punishment ?—Why be for ever harping upon one string—and like the bereaved Nightingale—

*“Che in miserabil canto affitte, e sole,  
Finge le notti, e n’empi i boschi, e l’ora.”*

Why endeavour to deceive yourselves and others, by asserting, that things might have been different had you been so minded—but that in the abun-

dance of your lovers, you played at *spring-pippin* with them, repeating the school rhyme—

“ *Pippin, pippin, fly away,  
Bring me an apple to-morrow day.* ”

Why bring the ‘eloquent blood’ into the cheeks of the timid bride, by declaring, that had you seized upon the first offer, as a God-send, a coach-and-four were at your service,—‘Forget these idle dreams—forget these vain desires.’—Turn the remnant of active passion—the principle of love still reigning in your bosoms—to nobler purposes. Let us be enabled to exclaim with Tasso—

“ *O Spettacolo grande, ove a tenzone,  
Sono Amore, e magnanima Virtute !* ”

We do not advise you to adopt the impracticable doctrines of the Stoics—the ‘*eradenda cupidinis*,’—for to extinguish your passions would be to destroy your humanity.—No—no—but we would direct them into a channel which would

render you happy. Let your love expand itself, like a fertilizing spring—but let it be freed from its worldly and sensual wishes.—You are, heaven bless you ! Old maids—and may live honoured.—Embroider your scarfs with the motto ‘*castitas et felicitas*,’ and apply to the blushing bride the following beautiful lines—and rejoice in your own everlasting flower :—

“ *Quám longa una dies, ætas tam longa rosarum  
Quas pubescentes juncta senecta premit.  
Quam modo nascentem rutilus conspexit Eoûs.  
Hanc veniens sero vespere vidit anum.*”

“ Mark one day’s reign, so long the lovely rose  
In virgin pride, with living purple glows,  
And as it triumphs hastens to its doom,  
While age approaching nips the blushing bloom ;  
That which the sun beheld, in rich array,  
Breathing fresh fragrance to the new-born day  
At his return declines the languid head,  
Its beauties wasted, and its glories fled.”

## ACCIDENTAL OLD MAIDS.

---

### CHAPTER VI.

"O! how the spring of love resembleth well  
The uncertain glory of an April day."

SHAKESPEARE.

Our third genus includes those of the Sisterhood, who, having never entertained any objection to matrimony, have been repeatedly 'engaged,' and who yet have become Old Maids—some 'accident' or cross purpose having uniformly interfered to destroy their connubial anticipations. They thus differ from Voluntary Old Maids, in

whom 'chastity severe' has prevented all chance of engagements—and from Involuntary Old Maids—as these have been, vainly struggling to reach the Temple of Hymen, but have never been able to achieve the initiatory process of a declared lover.—We think we cannot do better than favour our gentle and ungentle readers with the two following letters—both from distinguished Accidental Old Maids—and addressed to two young maidens, who had no desire that any accident should intervene which might devote them to what they most erroneously denominated 'joyless celibacy.'—These letters are in themselves curious 'confessiones amantium :'

"MY DEAREST JANE,

" You have done quite right, my love, in consulting me on the subject of your letter.—Our intemperate and irregular foot-post did not deliver it till yesterday, so that you will perceive



my dear, how anxious I am that you should have my advice early—indeed so much do I feel myself interested in your welfare, that I would have paid your excellent mother a visit on this occasion, had it not been quite impossible—I must however, tell you, my love, that I am seriously angry, that you should have suffered this ‘*affaire du cœur*’ to come so near a crisis before mentioning it to me. This was ill-considered—I hope, however, that you have kept it as secret as such things can be—and that I am your only confidante.—

“ You say, in your note, my dear child, ‘ that you have always understood that I was a distinguished beauty, and a reigning belle in my youth ; (a circumstance you declare you should have certainly found out from my present appearance) and that I had numbers of excellent opportunities for being well married.’ And further, that you have often heard me say—that I am an Old Maid by Accident—and, in conclusion beg that I will be so

good as to give you a few hints, to enable you to avoid a similar catastrophe.'

Ah ! my young friend, when I was barely your age, Agatha M——was, indeed, all you have heard; celebrated alike for beauty and feminine accomplishments, and hovered round by a crowd of suitors, all of whom strove zealously to win her favor. Time, my sweet Jane, has changed me greatly; though, unlike my friend Mrs. Inchbald, I dare still look the few relics of my male admirers in the face. My hair, once floating in raven blackness, is becoming stiff, and slightly gray; and my figure, once rounded and of very graceful contour, is somewhat thinner. But I must remember, my love, that fifty Winters have seen me a maiden—and, indeed, for the last four or five years I have almost ceased to think of such vanities. Your letter, however, and your situation have carried back my thoughts more than twenty years. You are yourself, my dear Jane, eminently handsome—and said to be

somewhat like what I was at your age. I therefore feel for you—and though you consider Old Maidism to be something dreadful, I will say nothing at present to the contrary.

“After some consideration, I think it will be the best to tell you briefly my ‘mischances,’ as you term them; leaving your own wit to extract the moral. This will, I conceive, be more to the purpose than a dry catalogue of hints—which you might fail to apply.

“My first love, if indeed I did love him, which I now seriously doubt, was Sir James Chartres.—I was then little more than sixteen—full of vivacity and childish gaiety, and playful as a kitten. He was a young man of Aristocratic birth and education; and proud and formal to a most tiresome degree. I walked with him, sang for him, and sat with him; and, in return, he recited Latin quotations, and laboured speeches full of ‘wise saws,’ I dare say, but which required all the awe I

felt for him to preserve me from laughing in his face. Proposals were made, however, and accepted, and I was congratulated on my good fortune by all my friends, and, in the end, a day was fixed for our marriage.

I looked forward to the event with a sort of girlish wonder—for a lover's kiss, or a lover's embrace I had never had from my betrothed husband. When he visited me 'stately step the east the wa', and stately stepp'd he west'—but no murmured vows of tenderness did he ever breathe—the whole seemed a sort of mechanical contrivance to get a wife—and whether he had any warmth of feeling under his dignified and prepossessing exterior I never knew.

"We were seated one delicious Summer evening in our garden house—the quiet hour—the odour of the closing flowers—and the deepening twilight had, I presume, stirred some chord of love in my bosom—for I sighed audibly—as the whispering breeze stole softly around me; Sir James was

standing at the open window, with folded arms, looking probably at the stars, as they were just becoming visible, and hearing this sigh, commenced a long harangue to the moon—I was vexed I believe, and to requite his lover's tact, I laughed outright. He turned round thunderstruck, for he was vain and pedantic.—‘Really,’ I said, ‘Sir James, it is a little hard, that you should address the moon in place of doing the agreeable to a young lady like myself.’ My gentleman was silent, I went on for I was piqued,—‘I should like a little more familiarity in our intercourse, and that you should direct your talents towards amusing your bride, elect,’ and saying this, I rose and put on my bonnet.—‘Familiarity, Miss M—— breeds contempt;’ ‘I wish you good evening, Sir James,’ and opening the door vanished from his eyes—I saw no more of him that night, and in the morning, my father received a very cold note, regretting that Sir James Chartres had misunderstood his

daughter's sentiments, and made both him and herself ridiculous. An explanation was asked and given, and I received a severe lecture on my imprudence.—A long apologetic letter was sent, but it failed in softening Sir James's displeasure, and so the affair ended. A very childish affair you will perhaps think it was; but if your lover is proud—cold—selfish—and fancies himself learned—and you like him—let him talk his talking, and don't be familiar or laugh at him. This sort of individuals may, for any thing I know, make good husbands, provided their wives are content to be silent; but it cannot be denied that they are very stupid lovers; and besides, my dear Jane, I was a child.

“The report of my engagement with Sir James, and of our approaching marriage, had of course, to a certain extent, deprived me of that incense which is ever grateful to a woman—universal admiration. But no sooner was this understood to

be off, than I was again surrounded by flatterers.— Amongst the most assiduous of these admirers, was Edward Manly—a man of singularly elegant and refined manners—yet little liked, because little understood by the society in which he moved. Shy, retiring, and shrinking from general observation, he nevertheless possessed in perfection every moral and physical attribute to make him deeply and devotedly beloved by a woman of feeling. The coldness and abstraction which rendered him unpopular, gave way in privacy to a warmth, an *empressement*, and a tenderness of acting and speaking which were quite enchanting. His cultivated understanding displayed its wealth, by embellishing his social feelings; and the low and rich tones of his voice came wooingly upon the ear, and chained her who heard them with a delicious fascination. His attentions in public were never obtrusive, and seldom apparent to common observers—but they were abundantly obvious to the one who was their object.

I was this object, and soon felt their full force. While others deemed him proud and repulsive, I saw, in a thousand ways, how delicately and how touchingly he was paying me homage—and I loved him, Jane,—loved him before I was even aware.

“ My heart had been untouched by Sir James; I had seen him come and depart without emotion—but the footfall of Edward Manly was music to my ears. I was uncomfortably happy in his presence, and unreasonably dejected during his absence. He was my equal in rank, and our attachment was sanctioned by my friends. Again I sat in the garden-house, but Manly was at my side. With one hand clasped in his, and my head resting upon his shoulder, twilight enshrouded us, the flowers closed, the stars came forth to gem the evening sky, the moon rose in unclouded majesty—but I heeded them not, for the glow of a first love enwrapped all my faculties. The murmured speech, the half-heaved sigh, the long yet



speaking silence, made the hours fly like 'winged moments'—and the one kiss at parting was an interchange of souls.

"Manly's moral peculiarity was an excessive refinement of feeling, a morbid delicacy of temperament, which made him shrink from every thing coarse or vulgar, as if its touch would have been profanation. Nay, so far did he carry these notions, that I believe it was painful to him to see his mistress eat, drink, or perform any of the necessary offices of our common nature. But I loved him, and love taught me cunning; and though it would occasionally happen that the vivacity of my temper hurried me beyond bounds, yet I was ever anxious and ready to make atonement. It was upon this rock, however, that my hopes and my love were shipwrecked.

"There was a Mr. Favell who frequently dined at our table—a sort of country Squire—a man of property, but of rough and blunt manners. He

was a noted Rouè, and, I shame to say, a very general favorite amongst our sex. He was a licensed freebooter of small favors amongst us, whilst his ready laugh and a fund of native though coarse wit made him very amusing.

“This man and Manly were the Antipodes to each other; and a fit of the sullens generally followed Favell’s visits. One memorable day he had dined with us, and, from some cause, I was left alone with him. As was his custom, he began a game of romps, and, in the midst of our follies, I was struck dumb on seeing the pale and intellectual countenance of Manly. He had opened the door unnoticed and unheard, and was watching us with an air of disgust and contempt I shall never forget. He retired immediately and left the house. Knowing his opinion of Favell, and the detestation in which he held his character and habits, I wept and trembled for the consequences of my unintentional offence.

“ I had walked out on the following morning to visit your mother, who then resided about two miles from us, and who was my intimate friend, and on my return I was overtaken by Favell, who was accidentally passing that way. The road led through quiet country lanes, and was Manly's chosen walk with me. I was annoyed at this rencontre, but Favell's amusing stories soon raised my spirits; and I was laughing heartily at some ludicrous incident he was relating, when Manly, at a sudden turn of the narrow lane, confronted us. He bowed haughtily, and passed on. I restrained my tears with difficulty, while Favell, no stranger to our attachment, and perfectly unconscious of harm, rallied me unmercifully on my jealous lover.

“ In the course of a few hours I received the following note from Manly—I have the original still, and even at this time, I not unfrequently moisten it with my tears.—‘ Agatha, I have loved

you as man seldom loves, and I believe that you have loved me with equal sincerity.—But we are parted, and for ever.—Twice within the last few hours I have seen my betrothed bride in unseemly intercourse with a professed debauchée—a boaster of ruined female innocence, and a man utterly destitute of honourable principle—I shall be miserable—but the sacrifice is made; as I can never take to my bosom and call her ‘wife,’ who has thus cruelly and wantonly lacerated my best feelings—Farewell—E. M.’

“ I never saw him again, for he died young and in another country; but his memory is embalmed in my heart—and many months passed over before I recovered my equanimity.

“ Four years elapsed, and although I had many lovers, and some ‘petite affaires,’ they are not worth detailing. Manly’s delicacy, and his sensitive refinement had made me fastidious, and I turned away with disgust from many men who

were very generally sought after. My parents died, and I was left mistress of a moderate independence. I was still young and esteemed beautiful, and had little intention of dying an Old Maid.

“ My next adventure, worthy of note, was with a gallant and fashionable Knight, Sir Thomas Morgan, who is yet, as you are aware, one of my friends. I met him, accidentally, at Lomington, and was pleased with his manners and address, for he had seen much of the world, and had undergone several moving accidents ‘ by flood and field,’ which invested him with an interest, higher perhaps, than his personal merits deserved, in the eyes of an imaginative and romantic woman, who was now twenty-four. He was exceedingly attentive, and though wanting in the delicate tact which had made Manly so dear to me—he had the benefit of long experience, and made up tolerably well in finesse, for that which he was short of in reality,—

Our acquaintance became closer and closer, and before long, he was my accepted lover; and as such, enjoyed all the privileges usually claimed by gentlemen so situated. Every thing went on well,—and if I did not love him with any great devotion and tenderness—I admired him, and determined to become his wife. The day for our union was fixed—proper arrangements made; and it appeared almost impossible that any cross purpose should again cheat me of a husband.

“The very day before that which was fixed for our marriage, I had taken a long walk in company with Sir Thomas’ sister.—At the verge of his estate, and about half a mile from the hall, which was to be my future residence, stood a very neat cottage, in which, as we were passing, we heard faint moans, and the shrill cry of a child. Prompted by humanity, we both entered the house, and found a young woman, and a new-born babe. They were alone; and I was astonished in finding in the

mother, a very pretty and favorite maid of my own, who had left me only a few days previously. Both Miss Morgan and myself, were too much frightened, and too ignorant to be of much assistance; and while we were standing in anxious suspense, Sir Thomas Morgan burst into the cottage breathless with haste, dragging after him our village doctor, and closely followed by an old woman, who acted as a nurse. Morgan looked unutterable things, when he saw us, and a guilty confusion made him speechless. We hastily withdrew; and on reaching home, I dispatched a note to him, requesting an immediate interview. He came, and all his 'savoir faire,' was insufficient to hide his embarrassment, and to gloss over this unlucky 'contretemps.'—'I believe,' I said, 'Sir Thomas Morgan is incapable of telling me face to face a deliberate falsehood. Is he the seducer and protector of Susan Ellerby?'—'I will not,' he answered, 'add a lie to my fault—it is with pain and deep

regret I say, that I am the man—but if sincere contrition can atone for my shameful conduct, I assure you that it is not wanting.’ ‘Your wife then, ungrateful man, I cannot be.—Our intercourse is ended.—Attempt no excuse, no palliation, but leave me.’—Sir Thomas retired, and I shut myself up in my chamber, to conceal my tears and mortification.

“I am not, my dear, Jane, a Precisian,—and for frailties which the world tolerates, I am ready to make allowances.—But for a man to leave me for months, with protestations of love trembling on his lips; and to remain under my own roof, prosecuting an illicit amour, with my own trusted maid, was too glaring a crime to be excused.—The discovery of this baseness, was purely accidental; as it was in compliance with Miss Morgan’s urgent entreaties, that I had extended my usual walk, and had pursued a route I had never followed before, and have never followed since. My pride revolted, when I found he had



placed his paramour almost within call of his intended wife ; and I steadily resisted all his future efforts at reconciliation. I have sometimes thought I was hasty and premature in my decision, but my heart tells me that I did right.

“ This affair cured me for awhile of all wish for marriage. I was thoroughly disgusted, and rendered too suspicious to be cajoled by the false oaths of man. Many efforts were made to induce me to again enthrall myself. To some I listened for a time—others I rejected—and I entered into no formal engagement till I was near thirty. I was no longer the reigning belle, for other beauties had displaced my pretensions—but I was still, I was told, a fine woman—and nothing was further from my thoughts, even yet, than dying an Old Maid.

“ My next ‘ liason ’ was with the late celebrated preacher, Mr. F——, a circumstance, my love, you will, perhaps, wonder at, as I had been educated as a member of our National Church,—

I was, however, given to understand, that the doctrines delivered by Mr. F—— were in unison with her tenets, and that the dispute was merely about outward forms, *and I was thirty years of age*. I was induced to visit his chapel by some female friends; and this I did not regret, for more eloquent or more impressive discourses I had never heard. F—— was not particularly handsome, and had a somewhat rustic and plebeian appearance; but, when in the pulpit, the man seemed inspired, so fervent, so touching, and so powerful were his appeals. He was almost idolized by a very numerous and very respectable congregation,—and I became a constant hearer.

“My thoughts were turned from their accustomed channel, I laid aside that species of literature which had hitherto been my delight, and I became a visitor of the sick and a distributor of tracts and bibles. I employed myself in making articles for the poor, and was a diligent teacher in a Sunday

school, with several other ladies, where our labours were lightened by the presence of F——, whom we looked upon as a man, whom it was our duty to honor. He visited my house, and we became friends. He was no gloomy ascetic, no self-denying anchorite, but an agreeable and conversible companion. His character and position made him at all times welcome, and seldom did a day pass without my seeing him.

“ I was still in the prime of life, but with F—— I should never have dreamt of coquetting; I looked upon him as something too sacred. Our intercourse, however, soon savoured of wordly passion, for to this he skilfully led the way; and I candidly own, my love, that never, in the hey-day of my spring-tide triumphs, had I felt so profound a gratification, as when F—— unequivocally declared that he adored me, and that to call me *his* would be the summit of happiness.

“ I was now rich, and I gloried in the idea that I

should raise him from dependance to affluence. I gave way to the revulsion of feeling, and the passions and desires I had so long kept in check made me now as bashful as a girl. He saw his advantage, and urged me to name a day for our marriage; this I did, but with a stipulation that it should be a secret between ourselves. To this he consented gladly, and with a proud heart I waited for the appointed time.

“ About a fortnight before the important event was to take place, I went to the neighbouring town, in order to see my bankers, and to do some other necessary business. Passing along one of the streets, I was much struck with the beauty of a head-dress, exposed in a shop window, and went in, in order to examine it more closely. While thus engaged I was saluted by Miss Orton,—a genuine Old Maid, my dear Jane,—whom I held in abhorrence. She had friends in my neighbourhood, and was often amongst them. She was

envious, spiteful, tale-bearing, mischief-making, and had more than once honored me with the name of Old Maid. I disliked her exceedingly, I assure you, but could hardly help being civil to her, though I always avoided meeting her, and it was chance only that ever brought us together.—

“ ‘ So,’ she said, to the person in the shop, ‘ you will have busy times, Mrs. Dreseer—your famous parson is about to be married—Miss M——,’ turning to me, and seating herself beside me.—I dare say I blushed and looked confused, for of course I imagined she had ferreted out my engagement, and took this opportunity to expend her illnature upon me. ‘ Ah,’ she continued, ‘ he’s a black sheep, Miss M——, a wolf in lamb’s clothing ;—better be an Old Maid, Miss M——, like you and me, than have any thing to do with parson F——.’ ”

“ My face, no doubt, was sufficiently expressive, for I was exasperated beyond bearing, at the

woman's assurance,—Before I could say a word however, she went on.—‘Yes, yes—Miss M. you will be shocked to hear that the sanctified parson is, at this present moment, under promise of marriage to four of your friends—Miss Famish—Miss Tideaway—the lively widow—and Miss Stubbs—Under a vow of secrecy, they have each told me of their approaching union, for they are my very dear friends.—Most women are such fools—but you and I, Miss M., know better. Well, you may laugh at them finely for it; my firm belief is, that he is already married,’ and so saying, she curtsied and withdrew. Anger kept me silent, and though I looked upon Miss Orton's story as a scandalous chronicle, yet my heart misgave me; for these four ladies were my sister colleagues, and I was aware that he visited them full as frequently as he did myself.

“ I returned home, and instantly drove out to make a round of calls upon my four suspected rivals. From Miss Famish and Mrs. Plaintive,

the widow, I heard a confirmation of the old maid's story, given under the seal of secrecy.—Both these ladies were plain, nay ugly, and scarcely as rich as myself, and both considerably older. From Miss Tideaway and Miss Stubbs I wrung the same confession—and, oh, Jane ! I had the mortification to find that to these four ladies he had promised marriage, at *an earlier day* than had been fixed for mine. Had I had the preference, love, it would have been something, for it might have been reasonably inferred, that his kindness to the others had been shewn merely to keep them quiet.

“ I could have brooked all but this. To sport with the feelings of five of his best supporters, and to make me the *last* !—It was unpardonable, my love, and hoping that it was a secret *not* in Miss Orton's keeping, I made instant preparations for a distant and lengthened visit, and left F.—, and his promises to my friends.

" This, my love, was a cruel blow, and I will not fatigue you, by any of my later mischances. After this date, indeed, they became less interesting ; disputes about settlement : matters of priority ; gout ; rheumatism ; wine-drinking, and politics, took place of sensibility, with my admirers. And I have before said, that for three or four years I have ceased to think about these things.

" Now, my dear Jane, you perceive that my being an Old Maid, has arisen from accident—in the first instance, laughing like a silly girl ; in the second, permitting an innocent familiarity ; in the third, stumbling upon a kept mistress ; and in the fourth, meeting with a cankered ancient storyteller. And now, my love, for my advice :—

" If you will marry, and your intended is formal, vain, and cold-hearted, never laugh at him—if he is sensitive, refined, and intellectual, be a perfect vestal in your deportment, and hold yourself sacred from the touch and conversation of other men—if



he is gay, and a man of the world, never inquire into the cause or origin of unwonted distress, or of pale and melancholy features among your maids; if a parson, listen to no Old Maid's history, nor enquire amongst the females of his flock as to his amatory propensities. And, *in fine*, my love, conceal your natural character, and blind yourself to the faults of your admirer—take him as he is, if you can catch him; and may you be as happy as a wife, as I am as an Old Maid.

“ I am, dearest Love,

“ Your sincere friend,

Oct. 1812.

“ AGATHA M——.”

P. S.—“ I have been so absorbed in my narrative, and so anxious to have it ready for to night's post, that I have not stirred from my writing-table for three hours, during which, my blue macaw has torn to pieces the pretty waxen doll you gave me; I am so terrified, lest the colouring matter should

be poisonous, as he has eaten a great part of the figure, that I have sent for Dr. Chymical express. —Adieu,——A. M———.”

The above letter came into our possession on the demise of its talented and most amiable authoress; she bequeathed to us a certain packet of papers, containing amongst other rare and curious documents, this brief history of her life, and a bank-post bill for £500.

At the age of sixty-five, she retained many traces of a very lovely woman, and was a model of happy existence. Cheerful in temper, and beneficent in disposition—she went about doing good—remarking to her friends, that, as she had no husband to humour, nor children to engross her care, she had adopted the unfortunate and the distressed. Thus like an ‘angel of light’ she lived, and her death made good the saying:—

“How beautiful is death when earned by virtue.”

Her letter is highly characteristic of the woman and the Old Maid. How delightfully and unconsciously her vanity peeps out ; and how accurately albeit by 'accident,' she traces the career of a beautiful woman.

Well, 'peace be with her ashes.'—She was an admirable creature, and full of the purest elements of humanity.—She had in perfection the 'mens rite—quid indoles.'—We have mourned for her as a 'bright star' departed—we have planted over her 'narrow home' a white rose-tree ; and as the Summer breeze 'gives and takes odours' as it sweeps over its snowy flowers, we sit and moralize in the secluded and beautiful spot, she selected for her final resting-place.—Eheu! Vale!

Our next historiette, is shorter, and of a somewhat different character, and bears the impress of a tender, susceptible, and gentle mind. The writer was, even as an Old Maid, a pensive and graceful being—with a soft blue eye, full of 'dewy

light,' and a 'tendress' of manner that spoke of by-gone times ; and a low and musical voice that came upon the ear like ' far off music.'—Her brow was lofty and contemplative ; and there ' Beauty kept her state '—telling of ' deep internal lovingness '—and of a heart that would have

" Hung existence as a jewel  
On the neck of new-born love."

She was an Old Maid by ' accident,' and might be called—

" A lovely widow in virginity."

" MY SWEET MARY,

" Your note of this morning, tells me that Herbert St. Anlaire, has of late been particular in his attentions to you, and you frankly confess that these attentions have been very grateful.—I should think ill of your head and heart, were it otherwise, for Herbert is perfect in ' all good grace, to grace

a gentleman.' And you are aware how fastidious I am in bestowing that title. You say, my sweet girl, that you are motherless, that you are indebted to me for many kindnesses, and that I am intimately acquainted with St. Aulaire; and you conclude by asking whether it would be prudent to bestow your affection on him.

"Alas! my love—it is a trying question—and though I would not dim your bright prospect, nor cloud the happiness of your young heart, for one moment, I should ill deserve your confidence, did I hesitate to speak the truth.

"St. Aulaire, is, I firmly believe, worthy of all the love a woman can bestow. Were I circumstanced as you are, without any knowledge of the misery that might result from it, I should love him with an impassioned fondness, bordering upon idolatry—for he has that about him, which cannot fail to engage the affections of any woman of sensibility. But love, my dear girl, is a perilous adven-

ture—and to love as you would love St. Aulaire, is a giddy precipice, from which you might be thrown by a thousand accidents, which would make your future life, one long night of exquisite misery.

He would engross your whole being—body and soul—heart and mind—he would become your world—your paradise, in which all your hopes and happiness would be centred : and think, my sweet girl, how frail and how uncertain is its tenure—and think ! oh, think ! how unutterably miserable, how wretched you would be, when you saw it crumbling beneath your feet.—Existence would be a blank, a sterile waste, and you would droop like the crushed lily, and pine in your loneliness ; wasting your sighs upon the desert air, and dimming your eyes with tears of regret.

“ Think not, my dear Mary, that I am painting distant possibilities, or that I would cruelly check the warm current of your feeling, by melancholy forebodings. Alas—no ! I have known the de-

light of a first and undying love ; and I have also experienced the miseries against which I would guard you. These I will briefly relate to you, and may my example be your warning.

“ Did I regard you with less tenderness, I should not thus voluntarily make a confession, which will wring my heart. It is a retrospection I dare seldom indulge in, and it is fraught with so much woe and so much luxury of grief, that I shall not venture to indulge your curiosity and compassion beyond detailing the chief point of my misfortune—

“ I was, as you are, motherless ; nay more, I might be said to be fatherless,—for my surviving parent was so immersed in business, that he rarely bestowed a thought on his only child. I was young, beautiful, and artless, when Henry Bolton was first known to me. He was then to me as St. Aulaire is now to you ; the peer amongst his fellows ; but it seems to my fond memory, that highly as Herbert is endowed with bodily and

mental excellencies,—‘my beautiful, my brave,’ was infinitely his superior. I had none to guide, none to warn me—I lived almost alone in my father’s magnificent country house; and here Henry first told me of his love. Oh Mary, I knew not myself—I knew not the passionate impulses of my heart—I knew not the intense fire that was hidden in my bosom.

“But his love, like the enchanted wand, opened my eyes; and in a few months I loved him with a depth, a tenderness and devotion that swallowed up all my faculties; nor was his fondness less than mine. We were together almost constantly. Hour after hour I have leant upon his breast, listening to his murmured vows; and have felt that to be thus, was perfect bliss.

“I had no thought but of him; I lived only in his presence; to see him was rapture; to be folded in his arms safety and content. I was his body and soul; but Henry was too pure and too noble to



triumph over my utter abandonment of self; no word ever escaped his lips, but which I could repeat to you without raising a blush upon your cheek; and no child ever reposed with more conscious security on the bosom of its mother, than I did upon that of Henry. His honor was my safety; for in his presence I forgot every thing but my love—I was even terrified at the vehemence of my own passion, and have hidden my burning face from him, lest my irrepressible emotions might betray him.

“The day was fixed for our marriage. I longed—oh Mary, for that day, when I should dare to give way to *all* my tumultuous tenderness.

“Day after day he was at my side, and alone, for I had no sisters, and my companions were shunned. Scarcely had I risen from my happy, but agitated slumbers, when the sound of his horse’s feet rung through my frame as if an angel’s voice had summoned me; and night after night the same sound echoed in my ears, as if it had

been the voice of desolation. A hundred times have I patted the neck of the beautiful charger that bore him to my arms, and which had carried him safely through a thousand dangers. Yet this animal, which I had caressed and fed with my own hands, which I had playfully called mine, was the cause of the catastrophe which deprived me of my beloved Henry.

“Four days before the one so ardently longed for, Henry had remained later than usual ; we had been planning various little schemes of home felicity, and time unheeded had flown rapidly. The night was, however, fine, and the path familiar both to horse and rider ; our parting embrace was indulged in again and again, till he forced himself from my arms, even before I had bidden him farewell.

“The hasty tramp of his horse soon died away, and I was left to my own musings. They were happy, my dear Mary, most happy—for my bridal morn was fast approaching. The next day came,

and I sat on my accustomed seat, commanding a long line of the road along which Henry always came ; the hour of his coming past by ; noon and night came, and still found me chained to the same spot. Oh, Mary ! the fond expectation, the weary delay, the heart-sickening thoughts, that chased each other through my fevered mind, on that day ! But he came not.

“ The night was passed in torturing anxiety, the tramp of his horse was heard in every whisper of the wind, his voice in every murmur of the neighbouring beech-tree. My disturbed fancy led me, time after time, to my casement : but all was quiet and serene abroad, and the silvery moonlight was resting placidly upon the garden.

“ Morning came, at length, and in uncontrollable impatience I hurried along the path, expecting every moment to see him winging his way to meet me. Still he came not. My father was from home, and I dispatched our groom to Henry’s

residence with a note, written in an unsteady hand, requesting him to come immediately or I should die.

“The man returned, and, with an air of dejection, gave me a note, addressed to my father—and not in Henry’s writing. I trembled so violently that I had no power to ask the servant a single question; and, unable to endure the suspense of sending for my father, with great difficulty, and with a choking sensation, I opened the fatal note—and learnt that Henry was dead!—

“I rushed from the house, and fled like a maniac to his residence. This was several miles from my own home, and how or when I reached it I never knew. Reach it, however, I did, and screaming wildly for Henry, was only restrained by force from seeing his mangled body.

“Of all this I have no recollection, for it pleased Him ‘who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,’ to deprive me of reason; and for many

months I was in a state of helpless unconsciousness. Time after time my malady returned; for no sooner did memory dawn upon me, than the horrible thought, that Henry was no more, drove me into convulsions, which threatened my existence.

“ Slowly—very slowly I regained composure, and the chastening hand of time wore away the extreme agony of my sorrow. His memory is shrined in my heart, and no second love has ever polluted its purity.

“ The lamentable ‘ accident’ which deprived me of reason, had occurred, probably, in twenty minutes after Henry had parted from me, warm with life, and full of affection. The lateness of the hour had induced him to leave the common track, and pursue a bye-road through his own property, where his horse must have stumbled and thrown its rider, as it was found near its master severely lamed. Many hours elapsed before he was discovered, as it was naturally supposed that

he had remained all night, and thus, whilst I was deploring his absence, and was haunted by unjust surmises, he was lying dead, in his young manhood, exposed to the winds of heaven.

“ Ah! my sweet Mary, thus was I robbed of him on whom I had lavished the whole sum of my earthly affections, and was plunged into cureless sorrow. Had I loved less intensely, or loved one less worthy, the shock, dreadful as it must have been, would have fallen with lighter power.

It was a catastrophe of which I had never dreamt—and often, and often have I murmured to myself :—

“ Oh had I thought, thou couldst have died,  
I might not weep for thee,  
But I forgot, when by thy side,  
That thou couldst mortal be ;  
It never through my mind had passed,  
The time would e'er be o'er,  
That I on thee should look my last,  
And thou shouldst smile no more,”

“ I tremble for you, my sweet girl ; St. Aulaire is a man to win your utmost devotion ; and you have a heart that would pour out itself unreservedly upon him. Think, should misfortune attend him, should he prove faithless, for man is a weak and vacillating creature, should premature death snatch him from you—think, my young friend, of the agonies I have suffered—of the grave of my hopes—of my long mourning. Let your love be less engrossing, have some one anchor, if possible, that might save you from destruction ; forbear to throw all that is dear to you, on one perishable object. Rather, oh rather preserve your maiden meditations free from the breath of passion—and become an Old Maid—than submit the very soul of your existence to accident. Come to me, Mary, and let me hear from your own lips your decision. I would guard you from misery if possible ; but if you love St. Aulaire as I loved

Henry Bolton, my prayers shall not be wanting  
for your felicity.

“ Your friend,

EMILY D——.”

July 4, 1833.

We have selected the two foregoing letters from many others in our possession, for the sobriety and rectitude of their tone. We have a large collection, and have some thoughts of publishing a volume for the especial benefit of young maidens; and as a landmark to guide them from the doubts, difficulties, and dangers resulting from ‘ falling in love.’

To the Involuntary Old Maids, we earnestly recommend their perusal; as they will shew them what heart-breaks and mortifications they have escaped by their untoward fate. The corroding sorrow of blighted hope, and the madness and despair arising from these accidents, have never



harassed their minds ; the long enduring anticipation, which had even become a certainty, with the sudden prostration of all their cherished delights, and the desolation of heart and soul which follow, a kind providence has spared them.

None but those who have experienced a real affection, can estimate the mental agony which for a time refuses all comfort, and which sweeps with the raven-wing of despair over the spirit that follows such a calamity. The ears hear nothing ; the eyes see nothing ; the memory recalls nothing but the image of the lost one—and sorrow sits brooding over the lacerated heart, till the mourner believes that her future life must be ‘ a wilderness of woe.’

These are the ‘ immedicabilia vulnera ’ that many Accidental Old Maids have sustained, and in consequence, they form a genus, having many points of dissimilarity from the Involuntary Spinsters.

Many of them deserve our tenderest sympathies, our kindest and most affectionate solici-

tude ; for the bruised spirit recoils from the stale jests and unfeeling sarcasms of the world, which pierce it through and through, like ' darts of living fire '—unmeaning allusions come home to their bosoms with overpowering force, and a careless word awakes some thrilling chord of agony.

Others indeed differ from these ; and having in their ' engagements ' had their passions and affections less deeply stirred, have forgotten the pain when death or unforeseen misfortunes deprived them of their lovers ; and there are many also, whose accidents have arisen from caprice on their own side, or faithlessness on that of their intended ; and having now outlived all hope, are become ' *ultra foeminam ferox*, ' and expend their fury indiscriminately on all around them ; and are incessantly bewailing the chances they have lost.

These Accidental Old Maids are peculiarly spiteful ; they are a species of chained wild cats, and are exceedingly troublesome and dangerous neigh-

bears to young unmarried ladies. Their own engagements have given them an insight into the mysteries of love-making, and they are as cunning as foxes—never failing to hunt out with unerring certainty, the first symptoms of a courtship within their circle ; and woe betide the parties if they are of a suspicious and credulous temper, or if the slightest flaw has marked their conduct.

It will seem as if the four winds of heaven had a commission to whisper nothing but their mishap ; for the disappointed spinster, filled with envy and diabolical malice, and determined that the joys she has lost shall be tasted by as few as possible, exercises incredible industry and ingenuity in propagating the scandal. She—

“ Plots her little hour, and skein on skein  
She weaves the dangerous mesh.”

and sometimes succeeds in sowing discord in the place where love had established its throne.

Sweet and gentle creatures ! who have bound your brows with cypress, and have yielded to the luxury of the tenderest melancholy, since fate has deprived you of your 'soul's essence'—it would be in vain to strive to root out a sorrow so fixed as yours. Neither would our admonition to you, to forget the lost one, have any beneficial results ;—

“ *Qu'en songeant qu'il faut qu'on l'oublie,  
On 's'en souvient.'—*

But there is a pleasure in the memory, that if you have loved as woman alone can love, and have loved one alone in his worth and beauty—you have preserved your passion pure and unsullied ; and that it lives shrined in your bosoms in all its original brightness. Consider what might have been your fate, had it happened, that your wishes had been gratified by the possession of what you prized so highly.

A few months or years might have withered

your brilliant expectations ; and he who looked so fair and desirable, whilst doating upon you with the fondness of ungratified hope, might, when certainty and joy had deadened the first burst of his tenderness, have turned coldly away, and despised the undying impulses and passionate happiness swelling in your souls.

The pang of disappointed happiness might have converted the well-spring of your love into gall and bitterness ; that his presence, whose very

“ Step had music in ‘t as he came up the stairs,”

might have carried back your feelings to other times, and a blighting comparison have filled your eyes with tears, and your minds with unavailing regret—that you might have found the obsequious and devoted lover, degenerate into the cold and careless husband—and then think what misery you have escaped.

Now you cherish his remembrance with un-

alloyed tenderness; he comes before you in all his young beauty; his voice again whispers round you, "breathing ambrosial odours," and his vows sound in your ears like some faint but exquisitely modulated echo. Mourn then gentle creatures, but mourn not in bitterness; look not on the world—

"As a banquet-hall deserted,"

without one bright flower or one sweet thing worthy of attention,—let your cherished sensibilities be developed and expended on the thousand occasions that offer themselves on your path through life.

And you amongst Accidental Old Maids, whose grief has been less deep and less enduring, but who have known the woes and joys of being beloved,—who have neither the cankered recollections of the Involuntary Old Maids, nor the severe chastity of the Voluntary ones; be but yourselves, and there shall in future be no let or impe-

diment to your happiness. Cold neglect has not damped your young desires, and when the one who had gained your love was lost, you took the better part and have remained 'sola cum sola.'

But to you who have suffered disappointment, resulting from 'accident,' to cloud your temper and to acidify your blood, and who go about seeking whom you may devour; we, the champion of your order, plainly tell you, that we will place you under the ban of our eternal displeasure, if you do not 'sine morâ' abandon your evil calling. You are Old Maids and this is your honor;—but if our caution be disregarded, we will publicly exclude you from our protection; if on reading our book you do not become very lambs, we shall hold you as incurable, and the host of our sweet friends shall not suffer injury through your tiger-like propensities.

"Be wise in time, 'tis madness to defer,"

## INEXPLICABLE OLD MAIDS.

---

### CHAPTER VII.

""Tis strange 'tis passing strange."

SHAKSPEARE.

#### [A CONVERSATION.]

THE next, in the order of our genera, is that of Inexplicable Old Maids—or ladies, who, having all things fitting, and a wish for marriage, have been often on the verge of matrimony—and yet have remained in single blessedness—a circumstance for which no earthly reason can be assigned.

In the Autumn of last year, we visited one



of the sisterhood, who resides in a little paradise, some miles distant from our dwelling, and who is, according to her own definition, an Old Maid by mystery. We found her busy amongst her flowers, and our conversation commenced as we stood leaning on the low wicket forming her garden entrance. We could not say that she was amongst her flowers the fairest flower, though her occupation and the coup d'œil, of which she formed part, might have awakened our muse, had we seen them some twenty years sooner.

“ A beautiful day and a lovely scene, my dear Miss P——. Had it been our fate to have lived somewhat earlier, we might have supposed that Flora or Pomona was before us, and done you fitting reverence.”

“ Oh, Mr. G——, is that you,—the hum of the bees has prevented my hearing your approach. (by-the-bye she is rather deaf.) I am very glad to see you, and in answer to your gallant speech

may reply, that, had I lived in a different age, I might have taken you for Vertumnus, with that enormous bunch of wild flowers in one hand, and that lofty stem of fox-glove in the other. —Upon my word you cut a very ridiculous figure."

" Spare your jibes, my sweet horticulturist,—and 'open the door and let me in.'—Thank you.—Your Eden seems to improve in beauty every time we see it.—What a magnificent bed of tulips, looking like unnumbered grace-cups chiselled by the hand of some 'master of the craft,' from gems of a hundred dyes."

The Persian said finely,

" Perhaps the tulips feared the evils of destiny,  
and so bore the wine-cup on its stalk."

and your splendid exotics are basking in the warm sunshine, and your wilderness, and your pleached

walk, and your 'alleys green,' are waving in the yellow autumnal light;—and this row of espaliers is studded with the very apples of the *Hesperides*.

Really we envy you,—and when we look back to our own place of rest, in the midst of yon smoky and 'sulphurous town,' were we one whit younger, and you one whit less dear to us; we would try our eloquence, and 'sly, insinuating speech,' to win this lovely spot—and its fair owner with it."

"Were it as you say, Mr. G——, I should have no objection to your making the attempt, as I could tell you beforehand you would certainly fail. Ah, well, don't put on your sneering look, and answer me with a jest—it's quite true, I assure you;—but sit down and eat a bunch of grapes, and drink a glass of my birch wine."

"Many thanks, sweet Miss P——, the grapes are doubly luscious, and the wine doubly exhilara-

rating from having come through your fair hands."

"A trace to your badinage, and do eat and drink in silence for once,—I will trouble you for a glass of wine, and some sensible conversation, fit for people like you and me.—Come, what have you got to say for yourself?"

"Why, to speak the truth, I would rather you made the 'frais' of our conversation than myself. You know how I admire your downright and matter-of-fact style. I assure you I never leave your presence without being wonderfully refreshed—partly by your shrewd good sense—partly by your good wine—and partly, though an Old Maid, by your *bonnefemme*, if there be such a word."

"Well, flattery is sweet, and though your sayings have occasionally a somewhat dubious meaning, I am fond of talking to you. You set yourself up too, as the Champion and Historiographer of Old Maids, though I am afraid you are neither

an Alexander nor a Comines. You are, however, a very conversible sort of a person, and, as I have often told you, I am very glad to see you."

"Let me thank you fair spinster in the words of Corinne,—' Je '——'"

"If you will thank me, pray thank me out of your own wit. You would have been a singular lover truly, if you had talked out of books, as you always address me. You would have made little impression I think."

"Ah, Miss P——, it would ill become me to talk on such a subject; yet I durst have wagered my wit against yours in the matter of love-making, and should have come off victorious; and now—you, in place of living like 'a lone Eremite,' and I of walking up and down a flagged pavement, day after day,—why we should have been jogging merrily down the hill of life together, happy in our 'mutual love and mutual help.'"

"Your attempt would have ended in nothing,

you may depend, though I do not dispute but that had such an one been made, I might have given it my best assistance.—I am a Mysterious Old Maid.”

“ A Mysterious Old Maid !—truly, then, you are a singularity. Now, I have got you in my gallery of graces, and have ranked you as an ‘ Inexplicable Old Maid.’ But on looking at you closer, there really is something strange and mysterious in your bearing—something that comes over the awed spirit like the gloom and solemn twilight of the dim aisle of a gothic cathedral.”

“ Positively Mr. G——, your insinuation is unbearable. Since you have mounted this hobby of yours, and have been flattered and caressed by us, you seem to think yourself a privileged person, and licensed to say and do anything that comes foremost in your erratic imagination.”

“ We crave your pardon, we are your slave,

But the association of ideas will, most exquisite Miss P——, lead us astray, at times. Do, we beseech you, unbend your contracted brow, which adds wrinkle—ahem—which makes you look as fierce as my old painting, of Minerva, making the first spider.”

“ Which adds wrinkle to wrinkle, you would have said; but we forgive you—there is our hand. Yes, I tell you, I am a Mysterious Old Maid, or, if you like it better, an Inexplicable one; for I have never been able to find out the cause of my remaining unmarried; and although you were unknown during my noviciate, yet many, full as likely to succeed, have sought my hand.—Some indeed with my right good will—and yet you find me a confirmed Old Maid! Yes, I have accepted offer after offer, and should most willingly have changed my condition, and could never yet comprehend how they went off—why they went off—and wherefore my person and fortune did not

secure me a husband; neither can I give any reason for it likely or unlikely."

"Let us pray you to favour us with one of your mysteries; perhaps our ingenuity may assist you out of the dilemma. Your history in general has already been confided to us; and we are, therefore, aware that no 'accident' has interfered in the way of your 'cursus nuptialis.' It shall be, if you please, 'sub sigillo confessionis,'—and you know we have already officiated, as Father Confessor, to half your sisterhood."

"No need for that whatever. I am indifferent what use you make of it, for as you ask me I will tell you. I have nothing of that sort to care for in future; and have been long satisfied with the old rhyme,

"Nobody coming to marry me,  
Nobody coming to woo."

"We are all ear—we beg you to proceed."



“ One of the most striking of my mysteries or inexplicabilities, from the notoriety and eclat attending its commencement and progress, was with Captain Sandeland. You most probably know the man, at least I have often seen him parading the streets,—an overgrown animal with a fiery and immense nose, and a most unconscionable rotundity of waist, with legs to correspond,—accompanied by his tall, scraggy and monumental wife, and his half dozen daughters, who seem rather to hop than walk, resembling altogether an elephant, a cameleopard, and a group of kangaroos. (We bowed in acquiescence, for the Captain was president of our club.) You smile, and, perhaps, think some extravagance tinges our sketch, and that I have not digested my mortification; you are mistaken however. The Captain, as the phrase goes, fell in love with me at the Cavalry Ball at R—anno— we danced together, and sat together, and he insisted on escorting me home, although I

was with my father and four brothers. He was then 'un homme galant,' very handsome, and very much admired; so that his marked attentions drew general observation.

"He came to our house the day following, and in due course, declared himself; every thing went on—

"Merry as a marriage bell."

and I certainly was proud of my conquest. His family was wealthy and respectable; and balls, parties, and visiting, were the order of the day; but the longest day, and the sweetest dream, must have an end, and it was formally announced, that our union should be celebrated at an appointed, and not very distant period. But there are 'many slips between the cup and the lip,' and so I was destined to find.

"It was the gallant gentleman's habit to visit me every morning, at a certain hour; so deeply

was he smitten with my charms; so strongly enamoured of my society; but at this juncture two whole days elapsed, and I saw nothing of him. Fearing something was wrong, though unable to divine what it could be, I sent a note, couched in maidenly pettishness, to know the cause of his absence; and I received one in answer, which I will repeat to you word for word:—

“ ‘ Captain Sandeland begs his warmest respects to Miss P——, and though ashamed and angry with himself, he is totally unable to account for his unwonted and extraordinary absence from her side, dear as she has been to him. He left her the night before last, if possible loving her better than ever; yet he had the mortification to find, in the morning, that this feeling had most mysteriously evaporated; and although quite conscious of the impropriety of his behaviour, he must candidly acknowledge, that his repugnance to renew his vows, is just now so

powerful, that he cannot prevail upon himself to visit her. He ventures to express a hope, that the mystery will speedily disappear ; and in the meanwhile would pray, that he may not suffer in her estimation.'

" I communicated this extraordinary and mysterious epistle to my family : nothing could be made of it ; but it was agreed, that two days should pass over, before any farther steps were taken for its elucidation, in hopes that the cloud might pass from my mystic lover—no such thing. Explanations were demanded ; angry messages exchanged ; and every conceivable means taken to clear up the singular event. Sandeland had nothing to say beyond what you have heard ; and solemnly protested, that he was as much chagrined as any of us ; and after the whole parish had busied itself for a month, in the discussion, it was unanimously declared, extraordinary and wholly inexplicable, and no wonder—for it was a mystery."

“ We are glad, my dear Miss P——, that you have selected this particular incident of mysticism, for, to speak candidly, we have repeatedly heard the Captain relate the same singular story, almost word for word. The mode in which he illustrated the sudden change of feeling, was by calling for a night-candle; and taking the extinguisher in his hand said—

“ Sir, my love for Miss P., was burning, on that night, as bright as this candle; when suddenly—pop—(dropping the extinguisher) it vanished.”

“ It was extraordinary, and most vexatious; for she was the finest girl in the county, and a good fortune.

“ Well, ‘ but Captain,’ we have said to him, wishing to probe the matter, ‘ had you received no hint, no allusion to something which might make you think less highly of Miss P——, Young ladies you know, are but ‘ kittle cattle.’ ”

“ Sir,” the Captain would reply, did I not know

that you are a friend to Miss P——, my answer would be different. Sir, Miss P——'s reputation was above all suspicion, perfectly stainless, upon my honor as a gentleman ; and if any man had ventured to breathe any thing to the contrary, I would have horse-whipped him, Sir. No, I assure you, the whole affair was incomprehensible; and what made it the more remarkable, the cursed change took place just when we had arranged to be married ; so that you see it really appeared as if I might have been playing with the girl's feelings ; but Sir, if any man had said so, I would have cropped his ears.' "

" Perhaps, Captain, the idea of marriage startled you—many a brave fellow has lost heart at that."

" Sir," answered the Captain, "*I have been married twice since that time.*"

" And so, my sweet lady, the thing was as you say, a mystery ; and we may finish your story, by asserting with the countryman on finding a hedge-

hog rolled up, so that he could find neither head nor tail,—‘ that it was a thing which neither gods nor men could comprehend.’ ”

“ Ah well! I am, at least, glad to find that Captain Sandeland has the grace to speak the truth of me, and am, perhaps, obliged by your mode of telling me. However it was a mystery; and one of those singular mental aberrations which may, for aught I know, proceed from no earthly source; such I have persuaded myself was the cause of the above miscarriage; and I thus console myself with the belief, that some kind power interfered to save me from unhappiness. As an Old Maid, I have innumerable sources of comfort, and extensive means of doing good. What I should have had as a wife, I will not venture to imagine; but this I can say, that many amongst my married acquaintance are, in these respects, very differently circumstanced with myself.”

“ There spoke the sensible woman,—and it is

for this amiable and Christian spirit that I love you. In place of fretting yourself, that you have remained a maiden, spite of yourself, and of souring your temper by seeing that others amongst your set, much less likely, have got husbands without difficulty, you consider the dispensation as one to be received with resignation, if not with thankfulness; and though conscious, from your own experience, that Old Maidism may be a happy condition, you remember the days of your youth, and rejoice with your young friends, when their innocent and natural desires are gratified; and unreservedly lend your assistance to all who are worthy of it. The consequence of which is, that you are universally beloved by young and old alike, and are a brilliant example of an Old Maid occupying her natural position in society. Is sorrow an inmate of your friend's dwelling, you visit it, and by your sympathy and tender condolence and assistance rob it of its bitterness. Does death



snatch away from some fond mother her only and idolized child, your paradise receives her, for your heart tells you that her agonies will be kept alive, if she remain on the spot which had been blessed by her little cherub; and though, even here, she may indulge her anguish, for a mother's grief—

——“ ‘ Fills the room up of her absent child,  
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with her,  
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,  
Remembers her of his gracious parts,  
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form,  
Thus has she reason to be fond of grief ’

yet your kind care and quiet consolations come like balm upon her wounded spirit; and when she leaves your beautiful home, gratitude to her benefactress, soothingly breaks up the current of her woe, and she mingles again in the common affairs of life, sorrowing indeed; but the first keen sting removed. Is any sweet girl pining in thoughtfulness, or brooding over the love springing in her

young heart, and robbing her of her fresh beauty, who but Miss P——, kind and gentle Miss P—— can be selected for a confidante; and thus you restore peace and joy to the anxious maiden.— If a parent is obdurate, or a lover perverse, who but Miss P——, is the agent of reconciliation; and thus you are become a ‘ministering angel’ to all within your sphere, diffusing happiness around you; and presenting an example to all your sisterhood; while many of them are ever representing their ‘beauty and their bliss’ as a shadow of the past, and singing with poor Sheridan:—

“ ‘ No more shall the spring my lost pleasure restore,  
Uncheer'd I still wander alone,  
And sunk in dejection for ever deplore,  
The sweets of the days that are gone.  
When the sun as it rises, for others shines bright,  
I think how it formerly shone,  
While others cull blossoms I find but a blight,  
And sigh for the days that are gone.

“ I stray where the dew falls through moon-lighted  
groves,

And list to the nightingale's song,  
Her plaints still remind me of long banished joys,  
And the sweets of the days that are gone.  
Each dew-drop that steals from the dark eye of night,  
Is a tear for the bliss that is flown,  
When others cull blossoms I find but a blight,  
And sigh for the days that are gone.’

“ you are a—

—————“ ‘ summer bird,  
Which even in the lap of winter sings  
The lifting up of day.’

and having taken a proper estimate of your condition, your life is a

—————“ ‘ great essential good,  
With every blessing understood !  
Where freedom—plenty—pleasure meet,  
To make each fleeting moment sweet,  
Where moral love and innocence,  
The balm of sweet content dispense,  
Where peace expands her turtle wings,  
And hope a constant requiem sings.’

Though you have never revelled in the transports of married love, you have

—————“ ‘ A greater bliss in store,  
‘Tis virtuous friendship’s social hour,  
When goodness from the heart sincere,  
Pours forth compassion’s balmy tear—  
For, from those tears such transports flow,  
As none but friends and angels know.  
Blest state ! when every thing conspires,  
To fill the breast with heavenly fires !  
When for awhile the soul must roam,  
To preconceive the state to come ;  
And when through life the journey’s past,  
Without repining or distaste,—  
Again the spirit will repair,  
To breathe a more celestial air,  
And reap where blessed beings grow,  
Completion to the joys below.’ ”

“ Happy therefore are you, and happy are those near you, and we never leave you, Old Maid as you are, without murmuring—

“ ‘ Blest is the man to whom Heaven grants one hour,  
With such a lovely nymph, in such a lovely bower.’ ”

"I thank you, Sir, for your good opinion, and your eulogy is not unflattering; nor will you think me guilty of vain glory, when I say, I trust that, to a certain extent, it is just. I am, thanks to the "giver of all good things," content, though an Old Maid! neither do I see why I should not have been so as a wife. I am willing, however, to believe that my sphere of usefulness is more extended in my present condition, and am, therefore, satisfied, and rejoice in it.—But see!

"Twilight grey is stealing o'er the sky,"

and, if you please, we will go to the matted parlour, and you shall criticise my tea-making—and here, '*à bonne heure*,' comes Jenny to announce all things are in readiness."

To the snug matted parlour we therefore adjourned, where our conversation took a wider range,

"From grave to gay, from serious to severe."

The hours flew fast in the society of this charming woman ; and as her cultivated intellect, and her rich, treasured, and chaste feelings developed themselves, we were unconsciously carried back to the days of her youth and beauty ; and we were tempted to exclaim with the Greek epigrammatist,

“ The youth who saw thee might rejoice,  
And blest was he who heard thy voice ;  
A demigod—who did thee kiss—  
Who gained thee were a god of bliss !”

but we checked ourselves ; and yielding to the genial current of ‘ friendship’s flow,’—it was late in the night before we rose to depart. The stores of her well supplied cellar, which contained much better things than birch wine, were liberally partaken of, and we felt ourselves twenty years younger as we trod our homeward way—so exhilarated were we by her cheerful company, the cold and refreshing autumnal night air, and by our dancing blood, which coursed joyously through

our system. Not that it must be supposed, our libations, in such society, had exceeded the bounds of moderation, for we are a person seldom seen

“ *Vino ciboque gravatus,*”

yet we had taken enough to make the several miles we had to travel a mere step.

And now, Inexplicable Old Maids, and Old Maids in general, we entreat you to ‘ read, learn and inwardly digest,’—and we wish you all—

“ A fair good night,  
And slumbers light,  
And dreams of bliss—and soft delight.”

## LITERARY OLD MAIDS.

---

### CHAPTER VIII.

" O Pallas ! queen of every art  
That glads the sense, and mends the heart  
Blest source of purer joys,  
In every form of beauty bright,  
That captivates the mental sight,  
With pleasure and surprise ;

" At thy unspotted shrine I bow,  
Attend thy modest suppliant's vow,  
That breathes no wild desires !  
But taught by thy unerring rules,  
To shun the fruitless wish of fools,  
To nobler views aspires."

" ONE BY A LADY."

" For much her talents to advance,  
She studied Greek, and travell'd France."

" EPISTLE TO A LADY."

**HARD** is the fortune of Literary Maidens.  
They are eyed suspiciously by their own sex, and



avoided by the majority of ours ; amongst whom the pedants and the fools would as soon think of marrying an Ethiop as a Blue, and make their motto—

“ Shield me, propitious powers, nor clog my life  
With that supreme of plagues—a *learned wife* !”

while the more sensible and rational, have a lurking fear, that women, devoted to

“ Pains, study and reading,”

may forget the necessary household drudgery of domestic life ; and have a foreboding, that mental and intellectual spouses, would overlook the simple and natural creed that—

———“ Woman must be blessed at home ;  
To this should all her studies tend,  
This her great object—and her end.”

Hence, it not unfrequently happens, that when

they are seduced into matrimony, their mates are either designing knaves, who expect to make their wife's reputation their own stalking-horse; or careless and indifferent, 'Simple Simons,' who care no more for literature, or the fine arts, than for the cabala,—or dreaming abstracted geniuses, who fancy that because a woman can couple 'love and dove,' or write a treatise on astronomy, or a tale of romance, that she must be a different creature, to mere beings of flesh and blood;—or moping enthusiasts, who expect to realize their own wild and unnatural idealities;—or haply some worn-out rake, or disappointed younger brother, who trusts in the halo of glory surrounding them, to obtain notoriety;—or finally, some poor and needy spendthrift, who looks to the labours of their pen, as the golden goose of the fable.

The very general suspicion however, with which they are viewed, happily frees the talented creatures from many of these dangers; and we know,

that there are amongst them some, whose intellectual pursuits have so far purified them from the calls of passion, that they would scorn the intrusion of Cupid, and spoil for ever the beauty of his

"imped wings with speckled plumes all dight."

by emptying their ink-stand upon him, did he so much as dare to whisper in their ear, or draw his 'ebon bow,' within arm's length of them; and that there are others so fearful of their sex's weakness, that they would, had they a chance, transfix his little majesty with their steel pen, and try whether his immortality was proof against cold iron.

Others there are too, who have levelled the 'tiny god,' by a well-aimed blow with a ponderous folio; and others who keep him in check by a continued discharge of chubby duodecimos. Others who guard their chastity by a shield of old calf-skin binding; and others, who trust their virgin honor

to gilding and morocco leather. Others, who constantly flatter the 'rosy boy,' and so prevent him stringing his good bow; or who blind him with sugared compliment; and thus escape his darts. Others, who steel their hearts and freeze their blood, by cold philosophy; others, who coagulate life's genial current, by swallowing doses of political economy; so that, should the 'subtle poison' be infused, it would produce no effect upon the stagnant circulation. Others, who wrap themselves in the robes of metaphysics; and in this horny covering, does away existence; and others, who suffer their souls to wander amongst the elements, or bury them in oyster-shells, or in the hollow tooth of a Megatherium. Others who lavish the whole sum of their affection upon a butterfly's wing, or the colour of a peony; and others whose love must be sought,

"Ten fathoms deep,"

in a coal-pit, or a lead mine. Others, whose 'soul's treasure' is incased in a block of granite, iron-stone, or grey-wacke; and others, whose passions and desires are fixed upon the 'Loves of the Angels,' the sons of Anak, or the gigantic Cyclops. Others who think only of the loves of fairy elves, the singing of the Troubadours, or the clashing of spears in some gallant tourney. Others, whose brains are turned with the fervid descriptions of Sappho, Anacreon, Bion, Moschus and Tibullus; or of Horace, Ovid or Virgil, and find the approach of a mere man, without the adjuncts of a poetical declamation, so different from the picture sketched out by their heated imaginations, that he is repulsed as a monster.

Thus are Literary Maidens armed cap-à-pie against the assaults of love,—partly by having their minds so much engaged with other matters, that they are unconscious of the existence of the 'Boy God,' and his shafts fly past them as little

regarded as the 'idle wind,'—and partly that the natural current of their feelings is diverted from its usual channel; and in place of filling their hearts with 'all a woman's weak fondness,' circulates round their 'throne of intellect,' giving birth to Capricios in prose and rhyme, or leading them to ponder on matters 'deep and high.'

Had we done them perfect justice, we should have placed them as the vanguard of the 'Order,' as a sort of 'chevaux de frize,' admirably calculated to shelter the rest of the sisterhood; for he must be a bold man who would dare to charge through so formidable a phalanx. This indeed had been our plan, and we congratulated ourselves on having marshalled such a battalion.—We were however forced from our position, by the whole body of Old Maids—non Literary—who raised a most astonishing clamor, and with drawn bodkins, and curved fingers, evidently meditated mischief.

Our voice was utterly lost in the din, and it was

in vain that we besought a hearing.—Our literary friends indeed stood fast, and seemed ready to do battle on our behalf,—but, though stout of heart, they were few in number,—and besides our great object was peace; we therefore drew off not a little mortified, and were vexed to find so determined a feud in the very heart of our camp.

When the storm had subsided, we proceeded to ascertain why ‘sisters in name, and in nature,’ thus repelled each other. We found the Voluntary, Involuntary, Accidental, and Inexplicable Old Maids, still grumbling at the idea of being fenced by Blue-stockings; and it required some soothing before we could prevail upon them to tell us wherefore they thus repudiated the shelter of their distinguished cotemporaries.

“Sir,” they remarked, “we are women in heart and soul; with all a woman’s frailties and foibles—we weep and we smile—we talk scandal, and nonsense; and, though Old Maids, we will not yield one jot of our sex’s privileges.”

We ventured to hint, very remotely indeed, that a little envy might make them unjust. It was well for us that this insinuation was but a very distant one, or we verily believe, that much as they admired us, we should have been annihilated. Brows were bent ominously upon us—stocking needles were sharpened, buttonhole scissors slipped within their sleeves, ivory daggers smiled upon, and a whole army of poodles and monkeys held in leash, ready for immediate action.

We were fain to humble ourselves, though our heart was swelling within us ; we who had fought the good fight in their behalf, who had been caressed by them, whose word had been a law,—now, when our labours were approaching to a close, found ourselves placed between the horns of a dilemma ; and in place of retiring from our labours, covered with glory, and heralded by unanimous applause, saw even our friends scowling upon us. We muttered in the bitterness of our spirit—



“ Souvent femme varie,  
Bien folle, qui se fit.”

Finding, however, that no immediate act of hostility was committed against us, although the squadron of Maids had already

“ Sharpen'd in mooned horns  
Their phalanx, and begun to hem us round.”

we begged a parley, and spoke to the following effect—

“ Wherefore is it, ye venerable, fair, and most excellent creatures, that we, your champion, have thus suddenly lost your confidence, and find nothing amongst you but cold looks, and angry attitudes. Is our scutcheon less bright, our reputation less unsullied, our arm less vigorous, or our object less noble, than when we were first hailed by you as a deliverer. Is the ancient scandal against your sex, then, true—

“ Varium et mutabile.”

and have we toiled night and day merely to make this discovery?—Where is our offence?—simply that we have wished your learned sisters to form your forlorn hope; and that we would have placed you behind their intellectual buckler, and the rampart of their unsold writings. How is it then that you have converted our regard for your safety into a crime?—Are not they Old Maids like yourselves? True, they may differ from you as to the cause, which has ranked them in your ‘order.’ Some amongst you are maidens, from a pure spirit of chastity—some by accident—some by mistake—and some Heaven alone knows why. And are Literary Old Maids to be driven from your society because they owe this honor to having fixed their hopes upon goose-quills, and foolscap paper. They have chosen their own path, and because you conceive that this path is a departure from the track marked out by nature for your sex, you would leave them alone on the Hill

of Parnassus; and refuse to extend to them the pleasure and comfort flowing from sympathy and union.

“ Had this refusal arisen from their side, we would at once have left them to their fate; but having shewn a disposition to amalgamate with the general body, we should be guilty of leze majeste, against our professions, did we fly from their relief, like a craven knight.

“ We will not venture to express so strongly as we might, our feelings on this occasion: but we cannot forbear remarking, that from you who have had your passions and affections kept in play, in whom love and pity have ever found advocates, in whose gentle bosoms all the tenderness and devoted fondness of ‘ lovely woman ’ beats with every pulse of your hearts—this ungrateful return for our services, and chivalrous devotion, has pierced us to the quick. We did not summon Literary Antiques into existence—we found them

as they are—and it was our ambition to make you a great and happy family. Our

“Sole offence in fond affection lay,”

“and this demonstration of fickleness on your part has given us more pain than if we had lost our right arm.”

We had the satisfaction of finding that our harangue had recalled the amiable sisterhood to their senses. After the first few sentences, the array of dogs and monkeys, whose white teeth glittered like the show in a dentist's window, was withdrawn, next the advanced termagants fell back upon the main body, and, at its conclusion, the whole were in disarray.

We remained standing, in a firm and melancholy posture, with our arms folded upon our breast, and with an expression in our eye ‘more of sorrow than of anger,’ when, after a short pause, a noted

Involuntary Old Maid stepped forward and making a graceful curtsy, said—

“Sir, our champion and our friend, we pray you to excuse this sudden and unthought of change in our behaviour. We acknowledge your services with gratitude, and beg you to believe our confidence unshaken. It has arisen from one of those impulses so peculiar to our moral constitution; and like true women we have, without reflection, given unrestrained expression to the feelings of the passing moment. Your knowledge of our sex will, we are confident, make this apology sufficient. We have hitherto, indeed, viewed Blues as beings half women and half something else;—but if, on examination, you are of opinion that they should range side by side with us, so conscious are we that it is our honor you are anxious for, that we will waive our scruples, and permit you to arrange them as you will.”

So saying, she extended her hand, which,

having kissed, as a token of reconciliation, we withdrew.

We now sought our Literary Spinsters, and found them making active preparations for warfare. Each petticoat was seated before a desk, and from the number of reams of paper, and bottles of ink, it was obvious that a dreadful waste of these must happen unless we could put an end to the unseemly dispute.

We were very graciously received—pens were placed aside, and we briefly but pointedly told them the opinion of their sisters—at the same time expressing a hope, that their explanation would enable us to plant the Olive Tree,—and assuring them that we—individually as the champion of Old Maids in its most extensive signification—were highly disposed to do them honor.

The first who rose to address us was a learned

and venerable maiden of severe aspect, and with an air of deep thought seated on her face.

“ We, the Literary Old Maids, have watched your progress with considerable anxiety, and have been so well pleased that it was understood amongst us, we would place ourselves under your banner.

“ The construction placed on our studies and conduct, by the general body of Old Maids, has, however, shaken this determination, and we are rather disposed to build a Pantheon for ourselves, than join the community. Sir, it is in the highest degree presumptuous to think of restricting the operations of the human mind. Its impulses, instincts, and propensities are too mysterious to be governed by ourselves. We have deeply studied Gonopsychthropœlogia, and have never been able to come to a conclusion,—whether the soul is a mere derivative from our parents,

and consequently imbued with their specific moral attributes,—or whether it is not an emanation from some higher source—the Shekina of St. Chrysostom—or the divine ray of Plato,—and, if so, then the cares, anxieties, passions and follies of love, are foreign to its nature, and beneath its attention. They are matters of habit and imitation, and unworthy its origin. We, for ourselves, incline to this latter opinion, believing that the weight of evidence is in its favor, and therefore we are disposed to consider the wishes and desires, that have troubled the rest of our ‘order,’ as mere earthly dross. We have also carefully examined the question, whether the soul or mind is a material agent, dependent on particular organization, and whether, at birth, its organ or seat, the brain, is not a *tabula rasa*, which merely receives or reflects impressions from without;—or whether certain innate ideas, are not attached to it, independent of external impressions.



"This question we say we have deeply pondered, and our conclusion, as far as we can at present draw it, is what we have before expressed."

She waited for an answer, but her abstruse enquiries, and her profound learning, kept us silent, and we made for reply a deep and reverential bow.

The next fair Montague, who rose to vindicate herself was a very different figure from the severe and stately dame who had just sat down. Her appearance was youthful, and she hardly seemed to come under our definition of Old Maid. She was a little sylph-like creature, with an abundance of dark hair—a pair of sparkling eyes—and a dreamy and fluty voice. Her *ensemble* was exceedingly engaging, and we bent forward that no tone might escape our attentive ear. She stepped upon the low tripod chair on which she had been seated, and shaking her hair loose from its artificial re-

straints, it fell on her face and neck in a mass of waving curls,—and then, bending gracefully, she thus spoke:—

“Noble Knight! welcome to our classic retreat—your fame has not been unsung amongst the votaries of the muses, and we have woven the chaplet of victory to place upon your brows, at the close of your gallant career. Alas! that our fair, but worldly-minded sister-maidens should deem that we cannot love!—Little do they know of the hearts of some amongst us; and we might with equal justice retort upon them, that the love they denominate as such, is but a base passion;—no more comparable to the divine spirit floating within us, than darkness is to be compared to light. In the motions of the very leaves of spring, in the blue air, there is found a secret correspondence with our hearts, that awakens the spirits to a dance of breathless rapture, and brings tears of mysterious tenderness to our eyes, like the voice of one beloved sing-

ing to us alone. We love the flowers, the grass, the waters, and the sky; and if in these delicious dreams, the love of beings like ourselves ever mingles with the magic dance, it is that of some bright creation, whose heart and soul vibrates with our own. But we awake from our vision, and thus apostrophise the lost shade—

“ ‘ But thou art fled  
Like some fair exhalation—  
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,  
The child of grace and genius.’

“ Not love !” she continued, clasping her hands, and fixing her dark eyes upon our face, and looking like a young Pythoness, under the influence of the aura sacra.

“ Not love ! is not our life all love ?—one long delight—is not every sweet sound and sight in nature a minister to our passion ?—does not the very wind of heaven sweep over the trembling chords of our inmost soul, and there awaken a

strain of thrilling music?—do we not hold communion with the sun, the moon, the stars—with the budding spring—the blooming summer—the golden autumn—the ice-clad winter?—and *is not the link that connects us—LOVE?* Do we not wander forth in the gushing sunlight, and find it peopled with myriads of happy creatures?—and do we not sit in the quiet gloom—and there comes to us a thousand soft imaginings! It is love—pure ethereal love, which forms an atmosphere around us, and gives its hue and coloring to our day-dreams, and our night slumbers. But the love which thus animates us is universal. It is an essence breathing from every pore, and can no more be concentrated on one object, than the radiance of the sun could be contracted and chained to one spot—or, were it so—were it to be brought to a focus—were its diffusive rays now embracing and enlightening the whole world, fixed burning upon one point, its intense heat would consume and

wither it, with the destructive brilliance and energy of lightning."

The fair enthusiast, whose cheeks glowed, and whose eyes shot forth gleams of living fire, here sunk on her chair, and our own pulse beat quicker—and we were agitated with unusual emotion as we rose to address her.—

"Gentle, yet passionate creature, well have you graced your own cause by speaking.

"Let the principle of love, glowing in your frame, still expand itself upon the whole circle of creation. Let your eloquent song still tell of your unimaginable happiness. Preserve inviolate that chastity of heart and mind, which is alone compatible with a love like yours. Nor would we wish a fairer hand to bind our temples, nor a sweeter lyre to sing our praises—than your own."

A lengthened pause now ensued—we had heard the extremes, and were anxious to hear what would be urged by a professor of less enthusiasm.

than the last speaker, and of somewhat less abstrusive learning than the first.

After a time, a lady of almost matronly dignity arose, with mild blue eyes, a quiet and composed mein, and an air of contentment and native ease, which made her very engaging—she spoke as follows—

“ We have been charged by our sisters,—that because we have avoided the every-day concerns of female life, and have addicted ourselves to mental pursuits, we are, on this account, renegades to our sex; and either do not possess, or have stifled the characteristic attributes of woman. This charge, if true, would make us unnatural beings, and would indeed justify them in refusing to make common cause with us,—but it is unfounded.

“ That we have devoted ourselves to literature and science, we are proud to acknowledge.—This has arisen not from our being destitute of our

sex's peculiarities, but because we have felt that in the career of intellectual advancement, our talents and industry were such, as to enable us to keep pace with the steps of man, and because we believe that our higher faculties were given to be so employed.—To suppose, however, that in doing this, we entirely forget our feminine occupations, and pay no attention to household affairs, or to the common world in which we live, is a fallacy. To suppose that in consequence of such labors we deaden our sensibility, and become unfit to share the sympathies of our kind, is equally unfounded. So far are we from meriting such a reproach, that many of us suffer virgin martyrdom and tear ourselves away from the domestic endearments of which we have an acute perception, —a martyrdom the more severe, in as much as their images are brought constantly before our eyes, by the nature of our pursuits.

“ These things we suffer, from a conviction,

that the quickness, fineness, and delicacy of a woman's conceptions are better adapted to serve the interests of mankind in light literature—the literature of the heart—than man's stronger and coarser moral faculties; and this noble cause it is which makes us submit to the privation of our social and physical pleasures, and not incapacity or inaptitude for their enjoyment. The wordly reputation which we may acquire is hardly earned at such a sacrifice.

“Independently of this, too, the road to literary fame is no flowery path, along which we travel, plucking fair things by the wayside, and singing our song of gladness. On the contrary, it is a rough and thorny track, and beset with difficulties. Neglect, or cruel misconception, often galls the sensitive and enthusiastic authoress, till the harassed spirit wears itself away, by unavailing efforts to be freed from thralldom. The beauties that are scattered so profusely over her



writings, are not the rapid, and spontaneous upspringings of her own mind. They have been diligently and toilsomely collected from the wide field of human sympathies, and the equally wide domain of external nature ;—but the field has been travelled over again and again, and after having constructed her ‘ amaranthive wreath,’ it is, perhaps, condemned as a literary forgery.

“ Thus driven back—if her elasticity of mind is still unbroken—the same painful process is to be repeated, and probably with the same result. She is met on every side by cold, and to her incomprehensible, trade calculations ;—and her choicest, and dearest productions are scorned and laughed at, till the throbbing pulse and the aching head, exhaust both her physical and intellectual energies.

“ Is not a mother’s grief for the loss of her child, an agony ?—is not the maiden’s, for the loss of a lover, deep and passionate ? Yet neither of

these equal in endurance the corroding misery that attends literary sacrifice. The indignant mind rises again and again from the prostration of despair, to be again levelled by the same ruthless blow.

“ Such is the fate of many of us ; and shall it be said that we do not require or deserve sympathy and attention from our sisters ? Have we not both been engaged in the search for happiness ?—and if we have pursued an opposite track, and one less common and less accessible, it has not less truly led us to one common goal—that of Old Maidism.

“ If our sorrows and regrets, if our hopes and desires partake less of humanity than theirs, they are equally part of our moral nature. Under these, too, the current of female affection still flows steadily, and we are ever ready to lend the kindness and tenderness, so peculiarly the attri-

bates of our sex, to every one who claims and deserves them."

A general murmur of approbation resounded through the academy, as the lady concluded her address; and it was easy to perceive that she spoke the feelings of the majority of the learned sisterhood—although some severe features were hardened, and some contemptuous brows elevated by the more enthusiastic philosophers. We were ourselves much pleased with her;—her address breathed the woman throughout, and the ease and dignity with which she spoke, satisfied us that her sentiments came direct from her heart. We spoke to the assembly thus:—

"Literary Old Maids! we congratulate you on your choice of life; you have well abjured the God of Love—and for you

" ' Virtue, at an easier price, displays  
The sacred wreath of honorable praise.' "

"The uncertain and turbulent joys which attend the search after happiness, in the train of sense, you have exchanged for the pursuit of wisdom ;— and the glories of dress and undress, you have neglected for the adornment of your nobler self—mind. Your sources of pleasure are innumerable, for to you—

—————"how fair appears each grain of sand,  
Or humblest weed, as wrought by Nature's hand !  
How far superior to all human power  
Springs the green blade, or buds the painted flower !  
A shell, a stone you can with pleasure view,  
And trace God's noblest works—the heavens—and you !"

"You have well considered that—

"Beauty's a short-liv'd blaze—a fading flower—  
But yours are charms no ages can devour—  
These, far superior to the brightest face,  
Triumph alike through time as well as space."

"Your fair and amiable sisters have, through life, pursued a phantom, and have found, when they

believed happiness was in their grasp, that it was a vain and unsubstantial shadow. They have like—

“ ‘ Atalanta—golden trifles chased !’

“ but you have steadily fixed your regards upon a higher object—nor suffer the solicitations of your frailties and foibles, to weigh down your soaring aspirations. It is yours gloriously to vindicate the intellectual excellence of your sex, and to prove that women are not—

———“ ‘ the toys of men, the slaves of lust,  
And but mere moulds to form man’s outward crust.’

“ To you it is given to show that your sex possesses the ‘ mens diviniior,’ and that the boasted mental superiority of man is but an unwarrantable assumption,—and that—

“ ‘ The heavenly spark that animates our clay,  
The primal essence, the effulgent ray,  
Th’ immortal soul—is not to man confin’d,  
Nor meanly squander’d on weak woman-kind !’

"and to demonstrate, that the noble and more divine faculties which make our species angels, in all but outward form, are bestowed by our Creator alike on both sexes. To you may wisdom—

———"her better gifts impart  
Each moral beauty to the heart,  
By studious thought refin'd.  
For wealth, the smiles of glad content,  
For power, its amplest, best extent,  
An empire o'er the mind!"

## LETTER

FROM AN

## HONORARY OLD MAID.

---

CHAPTER VIII.

No sooner was our work announced to the Sisterhood at large, than we were literally overwhelmed with congratulatory and laudatory epistles, from the 'dear creatures,' 'in rhyme, in prose, and in sounding blank.' Urgent entreaties were appended to many of these, that we would give them a niche in our volume; this we grieve

## LETTER FROM AN HONORARY OLD MAID. 193

to say was impossible, though the time may come, when we shall print a catalogue raisonné of them.

One thing connected with these letters was in the highest degree gratifying, and demonstrated that the anticipations we had indulged in, as to the excellent effects of our labors, would be more than realised. This was, that many of them were written by ladies, who had not even attained our prescribed limit as to age, and yet they claimed rank in our 'order,' with a degree of *empressement*, which showed how highly it had risen in their estimation. This has given rise to a fear, that the sex, in place of studiously making itself younger, than it is, in truth, will now add to its age, to gain admission in our ranks. This, though highly flattering to us, we do not wish to happen. We would say to it, be what Nature has made you, and as 'old as Nature has made you,' and then you must be right.



One of the letters we shall however give, as we wish our fair friend to tell her own tale in her own way:—

“ And am *I* then a thing to be beloved! ”

“ SHAKSPEARE.

“ SIR,

“ I have heard with grateful interest the ‘ classification ’ of our ‘ order,’ which you, its able ‘ champion,’ have instituted, and find that you would gladly learn any *peculiar cases* of Old Maidism.

“ I can furnish one—for though I lack a year and a quarter of the period, at which you confer the ‘ honored title,’ I beg that you will give me *brevêt rank* in the army of martyrs.

“ Without exactly belonging to any one of your ‘ five divisions,’ by their description, whatever I may do by name, I share some attribute in common with each. Disclaiming the

rare merit of those 'Voluntary Virgins,' who, in love with chastity, or some 'ideal being,' avoid the realities of wedded life—putting in no plea of 'coldness,' neither *God help me!* which pardon me gallant and flattering advocate! will never prevent my vain and helpless sex from seeking, in the support of a husband, to escape the odium of Old Maidhood.

"I still less resemble the 'Involuntary' spinsters, in whom I *do* believe, who have fought against celibacy, both fairly and unfairly.

"No 'Accident,' (that is, no death,) has ever torn a lover from me.

"No 'Inexplicable' change came o'er the spirit of any dream that I inspired, nay, though I have been 'Literary,' from my eighteenth year, and once found my gay *chansons* 'misinterpreted' by a critic, I am sure they were too feminine to scare a plough-boy, for I am almost as unpedantic as one.

“ Many women are left *single*—thanks to their own blundering vanity !

“ In a ‘ *Comic Essay on Old Maids*,’ which I read twenty years ago, an instance of this kind occurs.—

“ A girl hearing her father say of any thriving, worldly man,—‘ Ah, he’s a close shaver—a cunning shaver—a knowing shaver !’ imagined that matters had been reversed since Samson’s day, and that the more hair was cut, the greater its possessor’s power. Consequently she applied the razor in secret, till, just when she should have presented a downy cheek to the kiss of love, she bristled forth, a hirsute nondescript, derided for her folly, still more than for her beard.

“ What a lesson to those *blues* who, trenching on the province of man, spoil themselves as women, and forfeit their chance of married happiness, without attaining the fame for which they sacrificed it.

“ An opposite extreme ‘ hath been the sin that shuts *me* from mankind,’ Sir, I am *an Old Maid by Mistake!* a mistake of my own, which I can now explain—not remedy.—

“ I was the daughter of a respectable family, and, in infancy, flattered for my fairy-like prettiness. I early admired beauty in others, but knew not the value of my own, till the malâdies of childhood thinned and paled me; the shedding of my teeth, the darkening of my eyes and hair, too soon accustomed me to such expressions as these: ‘ Poor little B——! how she’s fallen off. Well, better be *plain* and good, than handsome and conceited!

“ A school full of blooming Bampkinettas confirmed me in the idea of my own ugliness; but as a lively, loving thing, with many *friends*, I did not then much regret it.

“ Before I was seventeen a near kinsman took me to live with him, and introduced me to high

society. I was a rising favorite, when a fall from a gig broke my nose, enlarged my chin, and damaged a front tooth. I might assure you that *these* features, at least, were originally perfect,—but, as a votary to truth, I dare only assert that they are now much more irregular than before, yet, as I never showed my teeth, the hurt had not been much, save that it afflicted me with head-aches. My pride was severely wounded by this tumble,—such traits of friendship did it elicit from the men,—and, as for the women, they actually seemed to like me all the *better* for it.

“ Now thoroughly convinced that I was a fright, I resolved, at least, to be a cheerful and amiable one. I considered myself as *hors de combat*, in affairs of admiration; yet, poorly dowered as I was, I did not think of dying an *Old Maid*. I waited patiently for some man, charmless as myself, yet honorable, intelligent, and well bred,—who, appreciating my character, might

seek my permanent companionship. I was content with liberty, yet full of obedience, and lowly-devotedness ; free from competition, incapable of jealousy, all bounty, and holy yearnings, prepared to forbear, forgive, make, mend, and nurse, in frugal retirement.

“ Coquettish airs, I thought, would level me with ‘the donkey playing lapdog;’ therefore I would neither flirt nor romp, dance nor sing, dress immodestly for parties, nor in masculinely for rides, talk of passions, nor do platonic. From the first I treated all my male acquaintance as if I had been their sister, I might rather say their brother ; and never being asked to marry, believed that no worthy man had felt more than a fraternal sentiment for me ; though I was once disgraced by being admitted into the million, on whom a *monkey* thrust the insult of what he miscalled *his love*.

For a long while I was quite satisfied in being

dubbed 'A good creature, with no nonsense about her,' and sometimes 'a kind soul.' Beauties boasted their conquests to me—brides and mothers poured their joys and fears into my unenvying breast—children chose me as their play-mate, their instructress—betrothed youths as their confidante.

"One, indeed, I thought as if he deemed 'the course of true love never *should* run smooth,' evinced symptoms that, for a moment, half tempted me to think, 'I might supplant a rival if I would,'—but, catching sight of my reflection in a mirror, I instantly laughed at such presumption, and felt, if the chance were possible, I ought, from *esprit de corps*, to be his lady's friend. I would not be trifled with, by a seeker after embarrassments. I liked the man, too; but, so frankly did I *appear* to speak, when I told him that 'I could not love *but one, the same*, and for ever, especially if it were made my *duty*,'—that

poor T. exclaiming, ' Every woman is at heart a rake !' deprived the *soi-disant* lawless one even of his esteem.

" Nor reading poetry, nor writing it, nor pets, nor nature's charms, nor kindred love, nor household works, however, could long prevent my feelings from concentrating on one individual. I had been haunted by an ideal being, by presentiments that I should, at last, adore its reality. The day came, ' I found the thing I sought !'—No, no, I dared not seek, nor could I credit that *he* might be found,—so far above me!—the lovely, learned, inspired, refined, famed, gentle and generous.

" Though the sun woo us not, can we deny his brightness?—Shall the fact of a peerless statue being already purchased, close our minds against its attractions?—In him I worshipped embodied genius and virtue—but, alas ! with human passion ! —How natural ! Though I was five-and-twenty pride and reason went over to the enemy.—



‘Should he discover mine idolatry!’ I sighed, ‘my sole alternatives were his scorn or his regret—he is too pure and I too insignificant.—To make one step towards his notice, were to merit and secure defeat, as disgraceful as were success in such pursuit.’

“That I might shun him I retired from the world, *but* to improve the happiness of my kind relative’s home. The very jests with which I ‘lightened half his poverty,’ were offered as a penitent’s atonements—to the *Duty* I once pretended to defy.”

“At the very height of this mania, a poor, low-born, single man, of repulsive person, and vulgar habits, but a reader and thinker, I believed, of exemplary morality, without one compliment to my looks or mind, implied that I alone could console him for a very ignorant, fussy, almost *Old Maid’s* rejection. With *such* a being, I dared to think that I might stand *such* a comparison, and

felt myself bound to give him a fair trial, I still muse with exultation on that creditable passage in my life, when I strove against mine every taste, for prudence sake. How I argued with myself on pity and gratitude, giving this rude and frigid bear my confidence, as if he had been a female friend, yet allowing him all the blameless privileges of an accepted lover.—Sir, the thankless arrogant mongrel proved an unfeeling libertine, incapable of love or amity.

“ So, finding what I had mistaken for a bitter sedative turn out a rank poison, I threw it from me, to gaze again on the sparkling cordial, which no enchanter whispered me—‘ Be wise and taste !’

“ Thus ended my thirtieth year. ‘ The beings who surrounded me were gone !’—even he, the light of whose mild eyes I thought my life. Finding by more than two years of experience that I can exist far from him, I have grown resigned. My senses, my fancy having regained a

healthful tone, my no longer controlled, no longer concealed preference and interest is calm as it is deathless.

“ I have passed through the dangers of youth without indiscretion. My character is respected, and my company sought, by a few sincere, faithful, and congenial friends, who—but what hath all this to do with my *mistake*? *Ecoutez*—‘Forth it shall!’ Vainglorious and egotistical as I must appear. Truth will out.

“ ‘No fear *now* of your marrying, and leaving me,’ said my kinsman, lately, ‘I wonder you never *did*, though?’

“ *Con quelle viso* ?” I asked.

“ ‘Poo! just calculate the small proportion which even a large head bears to the whole body; and confess that yours, a feast for the Phrenologist, has its merits, even in front. For the rest, I remember, on your completing your fifteenth year, our old doctor saying to our mother, ‘Well,

Mrs. ———, delicate as B—— was, when a child, she's a fine woman, after all.'

"Oh, what would your dandizettes say at beholding *me*, as one *ever* having been called a fine woman?"

"Ay, your helpless, tight-laced, sickly Misses; but conscious homeliness of feature had taught you to cultivate your mind and manner, to dress like Neatness, and to imbalm your youth, in that unaffected good nature, that makes you a girl, to this hour!"

"Hold, my dear Sir! remember that this fact, if a fact it be, never attracted the serious attentions of gentlemen."

"Really! but I happen to know that dear T—'s regard, though the honest fellow looked on himself as far beneath you, was fast growing into love, when you outraged veracity, self interest, and decorum, to cure it, fancying yourself unloveable, and him engaged. He was all the while

‘free as air,’ my pretty Bedlamite; for something better than pretty he always called you. I would not open your eyes to *this first* mistake until you had made that still more convenient one, for me, of falling in love with a man you can’t win fairly, and would not accept improperly, I’m sure.’

“Nay, mock me not by praise, ’tis better as it is!” I sighed. “His image, visibly imprinted on my heart and mind, hath kept substantial lovers away, as the unreal bee scares the hive’s living swarm from the orchis, which they suppose pre-occupied, by an actual plunderer. Could I undo the past, it were in my friend T—’s favor only—but as an attempt at change now were not only fruitless but ridiculous, so I am ‘merry and wise,’ I may love on, live to be the chaste intimate of my heart’s lord, and die a *very* Old Maid; though, it seems, I shall (like Sir C. A. the knighted quack) owe my title to a *mistake*.”

“It is certain, Sir, that now

“ ‘ I would not, if I could, be blest,  
I ask no Paradise but *rest* !’

“ I feel the advantages of my present situation, in an unqualified degree; my awakened self-love rejoiceth in unspoiled health. To the mentally industrious, *ennui* is an unfrequent, momentary fleabite. I know I should have been a good wife and mother; but I might have been an unfortunate one. Receive my certain assurances, that I remain,

“ Unalterably, your obliged admirer,

“ B. H. Honorary Q. M.”

## CONCLUSION.

---

### CHAPTER X.

———"Opus exegi."  
OVID.

"Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulce."  
HORACE.

Our labours are approaching to a close, and we do not hesitate to say that we are sorry for it. Our work has been indeed 'a labour of love,' and in the delightful precincts of Old Maidism we could pleasantly have dallied much longer. It is truly a sweet field full of odorous flowers—and it

is with pride we contemplate the weeds from which we have freed it—and the fence we have raised to preserve it inviolate from future injury. But the evening closes the brightest day, and it is necessary that a conclusion should be put to our pleasant toils. ‘*Finis coronat opus,*’ and we have nothing to add, but a few valedictory sentences.

The great body of Old Maids, we have seen, naturally arrange themselves into five divisions, with certain varieties. These varieties we have not, however, particularly examined; for, like the colours of cultivated flowers, they are almost numberless, and a volume might be filled with their simple enumeration. We have therefore left to our amiable and ingenious friends, the task of deciding upon their individual shades of character, contenting ourselves with placing them in well defined and distinctive genera.

We have, indeed, occasionally sketched characters, but they are characters broad in their



outline, and rather descriptive of a particular division of Old Maids, than personal pictures.— For their assistance, however, we have drawn up the following tabular view, which exhibits, at a single glance, our arrangement, and this they may fill up at their leisure ; and we need not say, that we shall be happy to receive, from all the antiquated spinsters of our acquaintance, a duplicate containing their precise status, with such hints of a private nature as they may think fitting.

TABULA ANTIQ.—VIRG.	
VOLUNTARY OLD MAIDS.	CHASTITY. PRUDENCE. DEFECT, moral or physical. INDIFFERENCE. COLDNESS.
INVOLUNTARY OLD MAIDS.	This subdivision we leave to the curious Sister- hood.
ACCDIDENTAL OLD MAIDS.	DEATH. DESERTION. MISFORTUNE, &c., &c. Much curious information may be obtained from private sources.
INEXPLICABLE OLD MAIDS.	This we leave quite open.
LITERARY OLD MAIDS.	<i>Ditto—ditto.</i>
ANONYMOUS.	

We repeat here what we said in our preface—that our pages are perfectly free from the slightest taint of indelicacy, or impropriety of thought or language. We are the more anxious to make this decided disclaimer, because we are conscious that the subject is, by many, esteemed, a very delicate one to handle, free from some approach to coarseness. It may be said that the progress of an author, on this track, is like treading Mahomet's bridge.—This we deny—the path is plain and open, and the objects and similes which surround it, breathe nothing but purity. Our book is not stained by a single stale jest or allusion.—In the language of Boileau in his ‘*L'Art de Poet*,’—

“ Je ne puis estimer ces dangereux auteurs,  
Qui de l'honneur en vers infames deserteurs,  
Trahissant la vertu sur un papier coupable,  
Aux yeux de leur lecteurs rendent la vice aimable,  
En vain l'esprit est plein d'un noble vigueur,  
Si vers se sent toujours des bassesses du cœur.”

More 'last words!'—we really cannot tear ourselves away.—It is like parting with a dear friend—the hand is often shook, and the farewell often spoken. The fact is, we feel melancholy at the thought of bidding adieu to our delightful friends,—we have been happy in their company, and shall feel a blank in head and heart when they are gone from us.

We would beseech them once and for all—to be content and they will be happy!—This is the—

“Cordial drop—Heaven in our cup has thrown!”

and they will find abundant cause for being so, on perusing our pages. Let the reproach of ill-nature and selfishness be no more heard, and let Old Maidism, in place of being considered as a condition to be feared by the young, and disliked by the old, be looked upon as a safe and pleasant mode of journeying through life.—And now, in truth and sincerity, we bid them farewell. One

word more, and then, indeed, farewell.—Should the world, at any time, treat Ancient Virginity with unbecoming rudeness or coldness, let it remember that it has a champion, ever ready to gird on his sword for its defence.—Let it apply to him, and whether he is in hall or in bower—at the festal board or in the house of sorrow, he here pledges his honor, dearer to him than life, that the call shall be instantly answered, and woe to the man who meets him in the lists, for—

——“ thrice is he armed  
That hath his quarrel just !”

and now again—farewell !

## L'ENVOY.

---

LET us say with Tibullus—' *Itē procul durum  
curæ genus—ite labores.*'

"Fly hence ye troubles, vanish into air,  
And fly, ye wrinkled family of care!"

No longer shall the borders of the stream separating young from Old Maidenhood, be traversed by disconsolate damsels, wringing their hands and filling the air with cries of anguish,—and vainly imploring the fates to protract their destined hour,—but at the sight of its wished-for waters—the sisters shall sing—

"Joy! joy for ever! our task is done,  
The gates are *pass'd*, and heaven is won!  
Farewell ye odours of earth that die,  
Passing away like a lover's sigh."

And one joyful rush shall place them in peace and safety. Let Cupid weep!—

“Ecce puer Veneris fert eversamque pharetram  
Et fractos arcus, et sine luce facem.  
Aspice demissis ut eat miserabilis alis,  
Pectoraque infesta tundit aperta manu ;—  
Excipiunt lacrymas sparsi per colla capilli  
Oraque singultu concutiente sonant.”

Let no compunctious visitings grieve them on his account, for it has been his cruel sport to aim pointless shafts at their bosoms, or to pierce those through and through whose pure spirits had dedicated themselves to virginity; and thus torment and plague them for his own malicious sport. Let them no longer sigh that the cold and withering hand of time, robs them of their external graces; let them not weep, as day after day, their hair, once their glory and their pride, falls like ripened corn, or changes from glossy black or golden auburn, to the snowy hue of age,—let them not say with Eumolpus,—

" Quod summum formæ decus, cecidere capilli,  
 Vernantesque comas tristis abegit hyems.  
 Nunc umbrâ nudata suâ jam tempora mœrunt  
 Areaque attrites nidet adusta pilis  
 O fallax natura deûn ! quæ prima dedisti  
 Ærati nostræ gaudia, prima rapis.  
 " Infelix modo crinibus nitebas  
 Phœbo pulchrior, et sorore Phœbi ;  
 At nunc lævior ære, vel rotundo  
 Horti tubere, quod creavit unda  
 Ridentes fugis et times puellas.  
 Ut mortem citius venire credas  
 Scito jam capitis perisse partem." ‡

‡ Lest any of our readers should suppose that there may be  
 some mysterious meaning in the above quotation we subjoin  
 a literal translation :

" Fall'n is your hair, for frigid winter hoar  
 Has stolen your bloom, and beauty is no more ;  
 Your temples mourn—their flowing honors shorn,  
 Parch'd as the fallow, when deprived of corn.  
 Deceitful gods ! whose blessings can betray—  
 What first ye give us, first you take away.  
 Thou, late exulting in thy golden hair—  
 As bright as Phœbus, and as Cynthia fair,  
 Now sees, alas ! thy forehead smooth and plain—  
 As the round fungus—daughter of the rain,—  
 Smooth as the surface of well-polished brass,  
 Thou fly'st with fear each laughter-loving lass.  
 Death hastes, amain ! thy wretched fate deplore,  
 Fall'n is thy hair, and beauty is no more !"



nor wish for death because their grace and beauty may have perished—they have something nobler to boast of than a fine head of hair, even in the period of its most beautiful luxuriance—for they are OLD MAIDS,—and in that one title is their glory and their happiness summed up!

END.

LONDON:

Newby, Printer, 11, Little Queen Street.

\_\_\_\_\_





